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massDOT AECOM

Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update 2025

Franklin Regional Transit Authority

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Acronyms

ACS	American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
APC	Automatic Passenger Counter
BRTA	Berkshire Regional Transit Authority
CDC	Community Development Corporations
COA	Council on Aging
CRTP	Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan
FPL	Federal Poverty Level
FRCOG	Franklin Regional Council of Governments
FRR	Farebox Recovery Ratio
FRTA	Franklin Regional Transit Authority
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
FTM	Franklin Transit Management, Inc.
FY	Fiscal Year
GCC	Greenfield Community College
IIJA	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
JWO	John W. Olver
LEHD	Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics
MART	Montachusett Regional Transit Authority
MassDOT	Massachusetts Department of Transportation
MBTA	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NTD	National Transit Database
PTASP	Public Transit Agency Safety Plan
PVTA	Pioneer Valley Transit Authority
RTA	Regional Transit Authority
RTD	Rail & Transit Division
TAM	Transit Asset Management
TERM	Transit Economic Requirements Model
TVM	Ticket Vending Machine
ULB	Useful Life Benchmark
UPT	Unlinked Passenger Trip
VRH	Vehicle Revenue Hour

VRM	Vehicle Revenue Mile

Glossary

Access: The opportunity to reach a given destination within a certain timeframe or without significant physical, social, or economic barriers.

Accessible Vehicle: A public transportation vehicle that does not restrict access, is usable, and provides allocated space and/or priority seating for individuals who use mobility devices.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): Passed in July 1991, gave direction to local transit agencies to ensure full access to transportation for persons with disabilities

Boarding: The total number of passengers getting on a transit vehicle during a specified period of time.

Capital Cost: The cost of equipment and facilities required to support transportation systems, including vehicles, radios, shelters, software, etc.

Central Transfer Point: A central meeting place where routes or zonal demand response buses intersect so that passengers may transfer. Routes are often timed to facilitate transferring and depart once passengers have had time to transfer. Strategic placement of the transfer point can attract riders to the system and may provide an opportunity for joint marketing promotions with local merchants.

Commuter Bus Service: Transportation designed for daily, round-trip service, which accommodates a typical 8-hour, daytime work shift (e.g., an outbound trip arriving at an employment center by 8 AM, with the return trip departing after 5 PM).

Computer Aided Dispatch/ Automatic Vehicle Location: A computer technology with advanced dispatching capabilities combined with automatic vehicle location, ensuring that vehicles are where they need to be when required.

Coordination: Coordination means pooling the transportation resources and activities of several agencies. The owners of transportation assets talk to each other to find ways to mutually benefit their agencies and their customers. Coordination models can range in scope from sharing information, to sharing equipment and facilities, to integrated scheduling and dispatching of services, to the provision of services by only one transportation provider (with other former providers now purchasing services). Coordination may involve human service agencies working with each other or with public transit operations.

Cost per Boarding: The total operating expenditures of a route or service divided by the number of total boardings. Boardings are often presented as unlinked passenger trips.

Cost per Revenue Mile or Hour: The total operating expenditures of a route or service divided by the number of revenue miles or revenue hours.

Cutaway Vehicle: A smaller bus built on a modified van or truck chassis with the rear section removed, allowing a bus shell to be added by a second manufacturer, creating a customizable mini-bus or shuttle for services like parantransit, local routes, or demand response.

Demand Response Service: Service to individuals that is activated based on passenger requests. Usually involves curb-to-curb or door-to-door service. Trips may be scheduled on an advance reservation basis or in "real-time." Usually smaller vehicles are used to provide demand response service. This type of service usually provides the highest level of service to the passenger but is the most expensive for the transit system to operate in terms of cost per trip. In rural areas with relatively high populations of elderly persons and persons with disabilities, demand response service is sometimes the most appropriate type of service.

Dial-a-Ride Service: A name that is commonly used for demand response service. It is helpful in marketing the service to the community, as the meaning of "dial-a-ride" may be more self-explanatory than "demand response" to someone unfamiliar with transportation terms.

Express Bus Service: Direct service from a limited number of origins to a limited number of destinations with no intermediate stops. Typically, express bus service is fixed route/fixed schedule and is used for longer distance commuter trips. The term may also refer to a bus that makes a limited number of stops, while a local bus makes many stops along the same route but as a result takes much longer.

Fair Share Amendment: A 4 percent Massachusetts surtax on income above $1 million annually approved by Massachusetts voters in 2022. The revenue generated by the surtax is constitutionally dedicated to funding public education and transportation.

Fare: Revenue from cash, tickets, and pass receipts given by passengers as payment for public transit rides.

Fare-Free Transit: Any transit service that does not require a passenger fare to ride.

Farebox Recovery Ratio: The percentage of operating costs covered by revenue from fares and contract revenue (total fare revenue and total contract revenue divided by the total operating cost).

Fixed Route: Transportation service operated over a set route or network of routes on a regular time schedule.

Headway: The length of time between vehicles moving in the same direction on a route. Headways are called short if the time between vehicles is short and long if the time between them is long. When headways are short, the service is said to be operating at a high frequency; if headways are long, service is operating at a low frequency.

Intercity Bus Service: Regularly scheduled bus service for the public that operates with limited stops over fixed routes connecting two or more urban areas not near, that has the capacity for transporting baggage carried by passengers, and that makes meaningful connections with scheduled intercity bus service to more distant points, if such service is available. Intercity bus service may include local and regional feeder services, if those services are designed expressly to connect to the broader intercity bus network.

Memorandum of Understanding: A formal, non-binding document that outlines the framework for cooperation, roles, responsibilities, and objectives between multiple agencies or jurisdictions involved in providing transit services.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO): The policy board of an organization created and designation to carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process. MPOs are required to represent localities in all urbanized areas with populations over 50,000.

Microtransit: A form of demand response service, open to the general public, that requires some type of "reservation," typically made via an app-based system. Typically, microtransit uses software algorithms to completely automate the scheduling of the trip, the fare collection (if any), and the route the driver will utilize (communicating with the driver via some type of mobile data terminals).

National Transit Database (NTD): The United States government's main repository of data about the financial, operating, and asset conditions of American transit systems.

Non-Revenue Vehicle: Any vehicle used by a public transit organization that are not used for passenger service but are essential to support transit operations and safety, such as service trucks, supervisor cars, and utility vehicles.

Operating Expenditure: The recurring cost of providing transit service (wages, salaries, fuel, oil, taxes, maintenance, insurance, marketing, etc.).

Operating Revenue: The total revenue earned by a transit agency through its transit operations. It includes passenger fares, advertising, and other revenues.

Paratransit Service: The transportation of passengers by motor vehicle or other means of conveyance by persons operating on a regular and continuing basis and the transportation or delivery of packages in conjunction with an operation having the transportation of passengers as its primary and predominant purpose and activity but excluding regular route transit. Paratransit includes transportation by carpool and commuter van, point deviation and route deviation services, shared-ride taxi service, dial-a-ride service, and other similar services.

Passengers per Mile or Hour: Productivity measure that takes the total passengers and divides by the miles and/or hours operated. The passengers may be presented as unlinked passenger trips and hours and/or miles may be presented as either total vehicle miles or hours or as revenue miles or hours.

Performance Indicator: A metric that provides meaningful information about the condition or performance of the transportation system but is neither managed nor used to evaluate the effectiveness of policies, strategies, or investments.

Performance Measure: A metric that measures progress toward a goal, outcome, or objective. This definition covers metrics used to make decisions or evaluate the effectiveness or adequacy of a policy, strategy, or investment.

Performance Target: A specific performance level representing the achievement of a goal, outcome, or objective.

Public Transportation: Transportation service that is available to any person upon payment of the fare either directly, subsidized by public policy, or through some contractual arrangement, and that cannot be reserved for the private or exclusive use of one individual or group. "Public" in this sense refers to the access to the service, not to the ownership of the system that provides the service.

Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP): A plan published by a public transit agency containing processes and procedures that define a comprehensive, collaborative, and systematic approach to managing safety. All public transportation systems that receive federal funds under the FTA Urbanized Area Formula Frants are required to have a Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan.

Revenue Hour: The number of transit vehicle hours when passengers are being transported. Calculated by taking the total time when a vehicle is available to the public with the expectation of carrying passengers. Excludes deadhead hours, when buses are positioning but not carrying passengers, but includes recovery/layover time.

Revenue Mile: The number of transit vehicle miles when passengers are being transported. Calculated by taking the total mileage operated when a vehicle is available to the public with the expectation of carrying passengers. Excludes deadhead mileage, when buses are moving but not carrying passengers.

Revenue Vehicle: Any vehicle, such as a bus, train, or railcar, used to actively carry passengers or operating on a scheduled route to pick up or drop off passengers.

Ridership: The total of all unlinked passenger trips, including transfers. One trip that includes a transfer would be counted as two unlinked passenger trips.

Ridesharing: A form of transportation, other than public transit, in which more than one person shares the use of a vehicle, such as a van or car, to make a trip. Variations include carpooling or vanpooling.

Service Area: The geographic area that coincides with a transit system's legal operating limits (city limits, county boundary, etc.).

Service Gap: When certain geographic segments cannot be covered by transportation services. This term can also refer to instances where service delivery is not available to a certain group of riders, or at a specific time.

Service Span: The duration of time that service is made available or operated during the service day (e.g., 6 AM to 10 PM on weekdays).

Spare Ratio: The percentage/number of vehicles that an operator purchases in excess of the number of vehicles required to provide the maximum level of service. The spares are required so that some vehicles may cycle through a preventive maintenance regimen while the full level of planned service can still be provided.

Standard: A recommendation that leads or directs a course of action to achieve a certain goal. A standard is the expected outcome for the measure that will allow a service to be evaluated. There are two sets of transit standards.

- Service design and operating standards: Guidelines for the design of new and improved services and the operation of the transit system.
- Service performance standards: The evaluation of the performance of the existing transit system and of alternative service improvements using performance measures.

State Contract Assistance: The program through which the RTAs receive state operating funding for transit at the discretion of the Massachusetts Legislature via the state budget process annually. The total amount of state contract assistance funding provided in the state budget is allocated to the RTAs via a formula developed with RTA input.

State of Good Repair: The condition of physical assets used in public transit, such as vehicles, stations, and signals, that permits their full designed performance level, ensuring safe, reliable, and efficient use through regular maintenance and timely replacement.

Title VI: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which requires that "No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

Transportation Network Company: Private sector companies that provide software routing, scheduling, and payment services to independent contractor drivers for a fee; these drivers then utilize their own vehicles to provide a (typically) curb-to-curb transportation service, sometimes to sole riders and sometimes to pooled groups.

Total Operating Cost: The total of all operating costs incurred during the transit system calendar year, excluding expenses associated with capital grants.

Transfer: Passengers arrive on one bus and leave on another (totally separate) bus to continue their trip. The boarding of the second vehicle is counted as an unlinked passenger trip.

Transit Asset Management Plan: A strategic document that helps transit agencies systematically manage their capital assets, such as vehicles, facilities, and other equipment, over their entire lifecycle and to ensure they are safe, reliable, and cost-effective. Transit agencies that own, operate, and manage capital assets and receive funding from FTA are required to adopt a Transit Asset Management Plan.

Transit Dependent: A population or person who does not have immediate access to a private vehicle, or because of age or health reasons cannot drive and must rely on others for transportation.

Transit Economic Requirements Model: A computer application published by FTA that is designed to estimate transit capital investment needs over an extended time horizon, helping transit agencies assess current asset conditions and adopt an asset management strategy that achieves state of good repair.

Transit Subsidy: The operating costs not covered by revenue from fares or contracts.

Trip Denial: Occurs when a trip is requested by a passenger, but the transportation provider cannot provide the service. Trip denial may happen because capacity is not available at the requested time. For ADA paratransit, a capacity denial is specifically defined as occurring if a trip cannot be accommodated within the negotiated pick-up window. Even if a trip is provided, if it is scheduled outside the pick-up window, it is considered a denial. If the passenger refused to accept a trip offered within the pick-up window, it is considered a refusal, not a capacity denial.

Unlinked Passenger Trip: Typically, one passenger trip is recorded any time a passenger boards a transportation vehicle or other conveyance used to provide transportation. "Unlinked" means that one trip is recorded each time a passenger boards a vehicle, no matter how many vehicles that passenger uses to travel from their origin to their destination.

Useful Life Benchmark: The expected service life for a capital asset, like a bus or utility vehicle, before major overhaul or replacement. Standards for useful life benchmarks for different vehicle classes are defined by FTA.

Zero Emission Vehicle: A vehicle that produces no tailpipe pollutants or greenhouse gases during operation, primarly through electric power from batteries.

1 Executive Summary

This 2025 update of the Franklin Regional Transit Authority's (FRTA) Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan (CRTP) will shape and guide the region's transit priorities and improvements over the next five years. The recommendations in this plan emerged from a data-informed process that incorporated historical operational data, stakeholder feedback, a market assessment, and FRTA priorities. They establish a framework for advancing strategic service changes, capital improvements, and policy initiatives and make significant progress toward improving mobility for residents across the region.

Figure 1. FRTA John W. Olver Transit Center

Source: AECOM, 2025

1.1 Changes Since the 2020 Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan

The 2020 CRTP featured a range of recommendations including service enhancements and capital investments. In the last five years there has been a significant infusion of state and federal funding supporting expanded transit service. Some of the investments that FRTA has made over the past five years include:

- Implementation and expansion of FRTA Access microtransit service
- First-time provision of weekend service on fixed routes
- Expanded demand response service to Shutesbury
- First-time offering cashless payment options for FRTA Access microtransit service
- Integration of Google trip planning into the FRTA website

1.2 Planning Process

The planning process for the CRTP was a collaborative effort in which FRTA engaged with key stakeholders, including representatives from social service agencies, Greenfield Community College (GCC), Councils on Aging (COA), and Community Development Corporations (CDCs). Input from these groups, along with guidance from statewide and regional transportation plans, was used to establish goals and objectives for this plan.

FRTA used both quantitative and qualitative input when developing recommendations. An evaluation of FRTA's current transit operations, including existing service levels, ridership patterns, and overall system performance, helped to identify baseline efficiencies and opportunities. Additionally, a market analysis was carried out to contextualize the region's demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. The analysis included factors such as population trends, job locations, and transit demand to pinpoint areas with the most critical needs.

In parallel, a robust outreach campaign was conducted, utilizing both in-person gatherings and virtual sessions to ensure input from a diverse group of stakeholders. Key outreach activities included a public survey, virtual stakeholder meetings, and an in-person pop-up at GCC.

1.3 Recommendations

FRTA developed 22 recommendations that address the needs identified through the CRTP planning process (Table 1). These recommendations will guide efforts over the next five years and provide a flexible approach to pursuing strategic improvements in mobility depending on how the future unfolds. For instance, significant changes in ridership demand could change how certain recommendations are prioritized.

The recommendations are grouped into seven primary categories: service, capital, policy, data and performance, coordination, additional studies, and other (for those recommendations that do not fit elsewhere).

Table 1. Recommendations

Category	Recommendation
Service	Increase frequencies on top performing routes as funding allows. Top performing routes are defined as routes with higher than system average passenger trips per revenue hour and/or routes with the highest year-over-year growth in ridership.
Service	Operate all FRTA routes with frequencies of 1 hour or better.
Service	Evaluate potential extension of Route 21 service in north Greenfield (north of the Mohawk Trail).
Service	Adjust Route 32 to reduce overlapping service with MART's Athol/Orange Shuttle.
Service	Expand evening service on weekdays to at least 9:00 PM.
Service	Use FRTA Access microtransit service to test ridership demand in areas currently not served by regular fixed route service.

Category	Recommendation
Service	Expand the FRTA Access program to rural communities not served by a COA or Franklin Transit Management, Inc. (FTM). This could include expanding the service area in Hilltown communities through the Hilltown CDC or in southern communities through the Town of Southwick using Ecolane software.
Capital	Improve the passenger experience through bus stop infrastructure enhancements (seating, shelters) deployed at high ridership locations and bicycle infrastructure (parking and vehicle racks).
Capital	Leverage technology solutions to more efficiently schedule demand response trips to increase the capacity of the existing fleet. Coordinate with COAs to ensure participation in software usage.
Capital	Explore potential software solutions that could help riders plan trips via the fixed route system, rather than scheduling demand response trips.
Capital	Continue to expand the FRTA fleet as funding allows to meet service needs.
Policy	Enforce a formal no-show policy for demand response service.
Policy	Develop, document, and update internal policies and procedures including service standards and internal training manuals for contracted operations staff including drivers, maintenance, and facilities staff. Document and define service standards to guide service changes and capital investment including defining high performing routes, high ridership stop locations, and service type.
Data and Performance	Add information technology and data analysis staff positions. Evaluate projected ridership demand to model scenarios to more proactively plan for service expansion.
Coordination	Continue to coordinate with neighboring RTAs such as BRTA, MART, and PVTA to facilitate transfers between systems for passengers.
Coordination	Continue to coordinate with regional stakeholders such as COAs and GCC to understand ongoing needs and priorities. Monitor ridership data to quantify demand and improve performance.
Additional Studies	Expand access to shopping, especially grocery stores (such as by adding an additional weekend trip to Big Y on Route 41).
Additional Studies	Assess service providers within the FRTA service area to identify areas of overlapping service and service gaps. Collaborate with FRCOG as part of the Coordinated Public Transit- Human Services Transportation Planning process to map the service areas of providers operating within the FRTA service area.
Other	Conduct public outreach to determine whether there are any major destinations not being served by the existing system that may be impacting ridership.

Category	Recommendation
Other	Expand the volunteer driver pool through publishing advertisements in local publications and social media, outreach to local organizations (chambers of commerce, civic groups, faith-based organizations), and advertising at public events.
Other	Explore driver recruitment tools such as hosting a single-day hiring event, streamlining/shortening the hiring process, hosting regular "drop-in" interview slots, and finding ways to expedite testing. Create materials that summarize benefits for operators (i.e., comparing health care costs or retirement benefits to private sector benchmarks) and "Why I Drive" operator testimonials. Solicit feedback from current operators on ways to attract new drivers and retain existing drivers.
Other	Develop a marketing plan for the FRTA to build awareness and support for service and increase ridership.

2 Background and Context

FRTA is one of the 15 regional transit authorities (RTAs) that, along with Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), operates public transportation in the Commonwealth. RTAs play a crucial role in providing essential mobility options and lifeline services to millions of residents across the Commonwealth. Demonstrating its commitment to continuous improvement, FRTA updates its CRTP every five years. This document represents the 2025 update of FRTA's CRTP covering the years 2025 to 2030.

This plan includes the following chapters:

- Needs and Goals: Overview of FRTA's identified needs and goals that provide the foundation for recommendations over the next five years.
- Existing Conditions: Review of FRTA's fixed route and demand response service, ridership, and assets.
- Market Evaluation: Assessment of transit demand through demographic analysis and feedback from stakeholder and public engagement.
- Performance Monitoring: Review of performance measures used by FRTA to assess service.
- Trends and Uncertainties: Assessment of key uncertainties facing FRTA over the next five years and how those may impact implementation of recommendations.
- Recommendations: Listing of specific recommendations to guide FRTA priorities over the next five years.

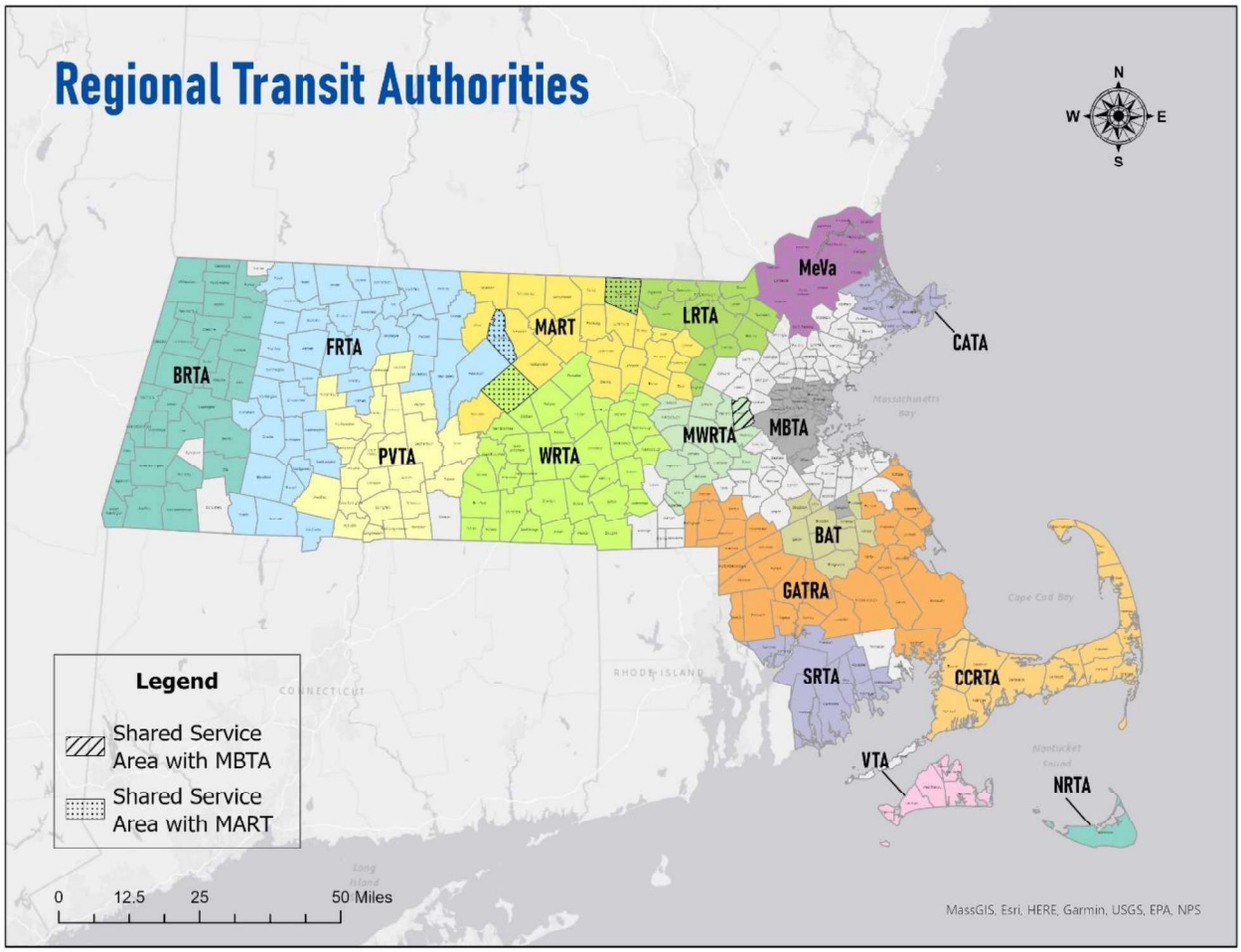
Additionally, the CRTP contains appendices reviewing fare and environmental considerations based on the broader statewide and national context and public survey results collected through community engagement efforts.

2.1 Overview of FRTA Services

FRTA is headquartered in Greenfield and serves residents in 42 communities throughout Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire, and Worcester Counties, which are located in the north-central portion of Massachusetts (Figure 2).

FRTA currently operates seven fixed routes, seven days a week, which connect at the John W. Olver Transit Center in Greenfield. FRTA also operates Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit as required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), non-ADA demand response service, and microtransit service.

Figure 2. Massachusetts RTA Member Communities



Source: MassDOT

Since the 2020 CRTP, FRTA has made new investments both in capital procurements as well as day-to-day operations. Additional information on those investments, as well as an overview of how 2020 recommendations were implemented, can be found in Chapter 8.

2.2 Purpose

The CRTP serves as a policy-level document outlining FRTA's vision and priorities for the next five years. Supported by the Commonwealth as part of a statewide effort, it complements other statewide and regional plans such as the *Beyond Mobility Massachusetts 2050 Transportation Plan* and *Report of the Task Force on RTA Performance and Funding* (see Chapter 3 for a complete list of relevant plans).

The *Task Force* report, in particular, recommends that "[a]ll state contract assistance will be connected to performance targets via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). MOUs will be bilaterally negotiated between MassDOT Rail & Transit Division (RTD) and each RTA and will identify performance targets in the following categories: ridership; customer service and satisfaction; asset management; and financial performance (incorporating a number of factors including farebox recovery ratio)." Based on this recommendation, the Massachusetts State Legislature has included language in the annual state budget since FY 2020 on the collection of performance data and the distribution of state funding in accordance with the most recently established MOU. As such, MassDOT RTD and the RTAs undergo a biennial bilateral negotiation process to establish an agreed upon MOU that includes performance targets in

the above-mentioned categories. Also included in the MOU is a commitment by the RTA to conduct a long-range CRTP as a mechanism to inform and support data-driven decisions, to work with local partners, and to communicate and discuss with MassDOT RTD on unmet needs or priorities and the potential for additional resources or support, if available.

Developed alongside these other plans, the CRTP provides guidance to FRTA's state and local partners as they develop their own plans. The CRTP can also serve as a valuable tool for helping the public gain a clearer understanding of how FRTA operates, the value it provides, and opportunities for transit service improvements.

Over the next five years, this document will serve as a resource, offering strategic guidance to inform policy decisions that shape the region's transportation future. Acting as a roadmap for data-driven decision-making that can inform more detailed capital and operational planning, the CRTP plays a dual role: it is both a product of ongoing discussions on public transportation in the state and region and a catalyst for future dialogue and action.

3 Needs and Goals

Over the next five years, FRTA seeks to address critical needs within the agency and the communities it serves. As part of FRTA's CRTP, goals and objectives were identified for the next five years in alignment with the agency's mission. The goals set forth include exploring opportunities for interconnectivity, focusing on fixed route services, defining FRTA's policies, progressing key agency updates, and promoting coordination with regional and statewide partners.

3.1 Statewide Policies and Goals

Over the last six years, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has developed the following statewide planning and policy documents that are relevant to FRTA's CRTP update and goal setting:

- *Beyond Mobility Massachusetts 2050 Transportation Plan (2024)*
- *Regional Bus Network Assessment (2024)*
- *Benefits of Regional Mobility Managers Plan (2023)*
- *Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2050 (2022)*
- *Massachusetts State Plan on Aging (2021)*
- *Massachusetts 2050 Decarbonization Roadmap (2020)*
- *Report of the Task Force on RTA Performance and Funding (2019)*

Together, the documents highlight a number of robust goals and action steps that are relevant for all Commonwealth RTAs. Common goal themes as noted in the statewide documents that help inform the development of FRTA-specific needs and goals for the 2025 CRTP include:

- Identifying opportunities to implement zero emission fleets
- Promoting cross-RTA coordination and collaboration among services, where feasible
- Supporting and growing transit ridership
- Exploring and maximizing innovative funding sources
- Ensuring COA services prioritize access for older adults and persons with disabilities

As detailed further in this chapter, the overarching goals included in this CRTP are aligned with many of these statewide goals.

3.2 Agency Mission

FRTA has established a rural transit system that will improve the quality of life, environmental sustainability, and economic health of the region and its residents through cost-effective, accessible, safe, dependable, and courteous transportation services. FRTA is committed to finding ways to assist those living in the 42 member communities throughout Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire, and Worcester Counties so that they will have access to transit needed to nurture independence in all stages of life and help reduce the need to own a vehicle. By educating consumers on the benefits of public transit, FRTA hopes to reduce the carbon footprint in its service area and in surrounding communities.

3.3 Identified Needs

Through review and discussion of existing transportation challenges, past community feedback, the findings from the 2020 CRTP, and regional, state, and federal priorities, FRTA identified the following needs to target in its 2025 CRTP. The current list of needs includes the following, in no order of priority:

- Expanding access to FRTA services
- Providing reliable fixed route services
- Promoting continous improvements to operational efficiency
- Ensuring consistency through administration, operations, and passenger experience

3.4 Goals and Objectives

Starting with the 2020 CRTP, an evaluation was conducted of the previous goals, objectives, needs, and recommendations. This information served as the basis for FRTA staff to identify priorities, opportunities, and any potential barriers that informed this CRTP. To identify goals and objectives, the evaluation focused on FRTA priorities, as well as those of its community and stakeholders. The evaluation also focused on the broader context, including Commonwealth policies and goals and federal considerations.

The overarching goals identified for FRTA's 2025 CRTP include striving for service consistency, leveraging technology for improved operations and decision-making, making passenger-centered investments, and ensuring efficient operations and service delivery. The objectives associated with each of these five goals are as follows, in no order of priority:

- Goal 1: Enhance connectivity and consistency of FRTA services
  - Objective 1: Increase service frequencies on fixed routes.
  - Objective 2: Increase cross community connection in the FRTA region for demand response.
  - Objective 3: Create consistent service hours and publish accurate schedule information.
- Goal 2: Promote administrative and operational efficiency through additional staff and agency policies
  - Objective 1: Introduce a formal no-show policy and publish it online for passenger reference.
  - Objective 2: Create new internal positions for Information Technology and oversight of Operations/Procurement staff.
  - Objective 3: Analyze consolidation of the number of service providers operating within the FRTA service area.
  - Objective 4: Develop, document, and update internal policies and procedures including service standards and internal training manuals for operators, administrative, and other staff.
- Goal 3: Leverage technology enhancements for operational and customer benefits
  - Objective 1: Collect and monitor route-level on-time performance data for use in a data-driven framework for determining service levels.

  - Objective 2: Upgrade FRTA's operational software and hardware to enhance safety and improve efficiency.
  - Objective 3: Track ridership for COAs operating within the FRTA service area using data technologies.
- Goal 4: Make it easier for passengers to plan their trips and ride FRTA service
  - Objective 1: Provide passenger technology amenities such as onboard Wi-Fi technology, trip-planning capabilities, and real-time arrivals.
  - Objective 2: Improve bus stop accessibility for passengers with disabilities and other mobility impairments.
  - Objective 3: Identify high ridership bus stops and prioritize installation of new shelters for passenger comfort.
  - Objective 4: Improve infrastructure for passengers using bicycles for first mile/last mile connections.
- Goal 5: Maintain the FRTA fleet in an efficient and cost-effective manner
  - Objective 1: Maintain vehicles at or above standards for state of good repair.
  - Objective 2: Evaluate the need for a satellite operations and maintenance facility.
  - Objective 3: Replace fleet vehicles as they approach their useful life benchmark (ULB).

These goals and objectives were assessed against progress since the 2020 CRTP in an effort to identify opportunities to meet FRTA's needs. Along with a detailed data assessment of FRTA's system from the last five years and input from stakeholder engagement efforts they were used to inform recommendations in this CRTP.

4 Existing Conditions

Over the next five years, FRTA seeks to address critical needs within the agency and the communities it serves. A first step toward evaluating needs is to review existing conditions. This chapter provides a comprehensive assessment of FRTA's existing conditions, including transit services provided, ridership, and performance evaluation metrics and data.

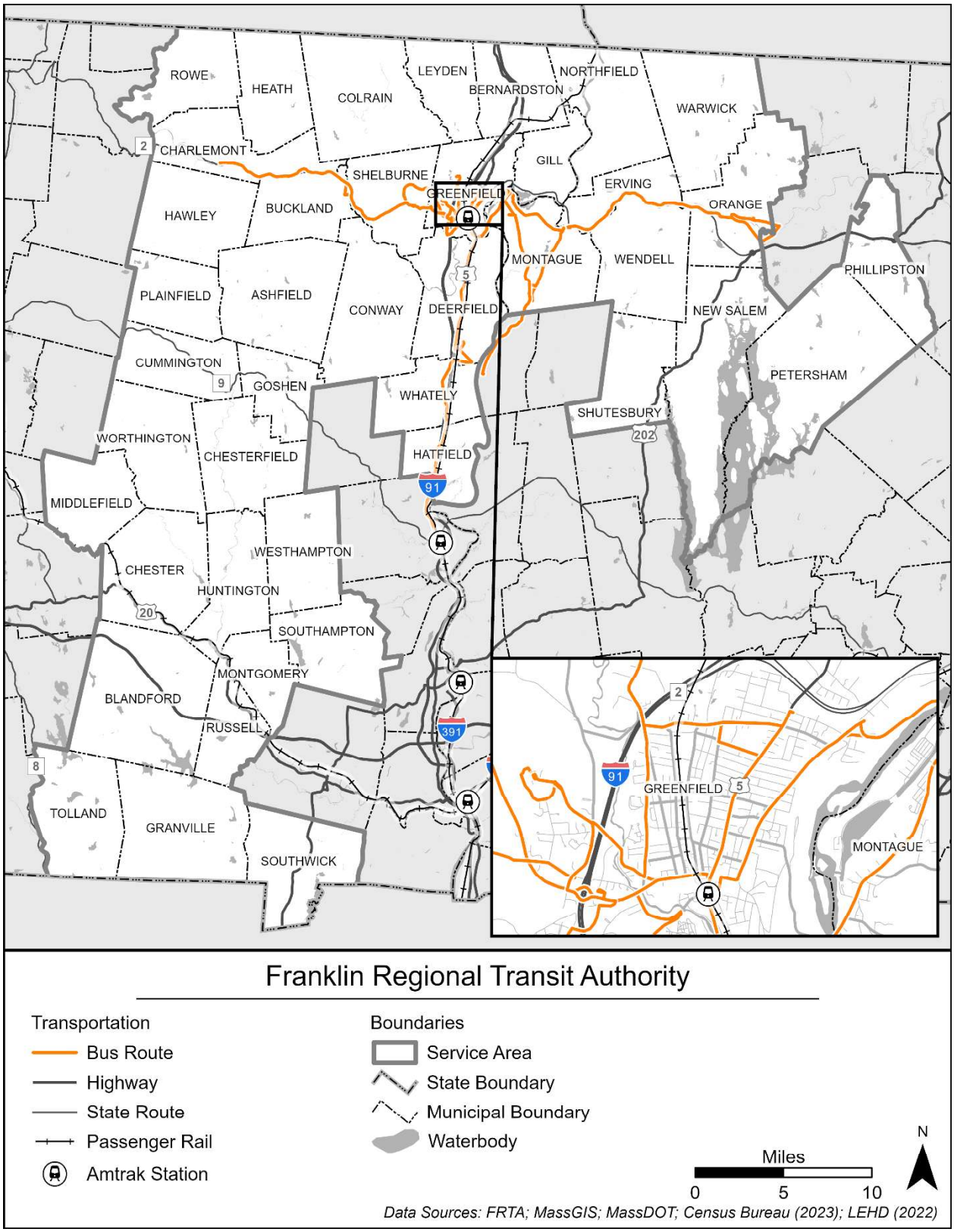
4.1 Transit Service Overview

FRTA was created through Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 161B in 1978. FRTA operates seven fixed routes, with all routes originating/terminating at the John W. Olver Transit Center (JWO Transit Center), except for the Crosstown Connector (Route 24), which serves the JWO Transit Center mid-route. FRTA also operates ADA complementary paratransit service, non-ADA demand response, and microtransit. Additionally, FRTA administers a medical appointment transportation program where trips are completed by volunteer drivers using their personal vehicles (Med-Ride).

FRTA serves residents in 42 communities throughout Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire, and Worcester Counties, which are located in the north-central portion of Massachusetts. FRTA communities include Ashfield, Bernardston, Blandford, Buckland, Charlemont, Chester, Chesterfield, Colrain, Conway, Cummington, Deerfield, Erving, Gill, Goshen, Granville, Greenfield, Hatfield, Hawley, Heath, Huntington, Leyden, Middlefield, Montague, Montgomery, New Salem, Northfield, Orange, Petersham, Phillipston, Plainfield, Rowe, Russell, Shelburne, Shutesbury, Southampton, Southwick, Tolland, Warwick, Wendell, Westhampton, Whately, and Worthington. FRTA has the largest service area among all Massachusetts RTAs, covering 1,260 square miles, almost all of which (96.9 percent) is considered rural.

The full FRTA service area is depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3. FRTA Service Area



Source: AECOM (2025)

On an annual basis, FRTA carries approximately 170,000 passengers, traveling approximately 730,000 miles and operating over 36,000 revenue hours, with an operating budget of approximately $4.3 million (Table 2).

Table 2. Service Statistics by Service Type (FY 2024)

FY 2024 Data	Fixed Route	Percentage of Total	Demand Response	Percentage of Total	Total
Ridership	133,717	78.7%	36,124	21.3%	169,841
Revenue Hours	16,988	46.8%	19,183	53.2%	36,319
Revenue Miles	428,181	58.6%	296,102	41.4%	730,403
Operating Costs	$2,268,252	53.2%	$1,967,122	46.8%	$4,266,790

Source: MassDOT (2025)

4.1.1 Service Descriptions

This section provides a summary of transit services currently provided by FRTA.

4.1.1.1 Fixed Routes

FRTA's service area is served by seven fixed routes, listed in Table 3. Nearly all routes originate/terminate at the JWO Transit Center except for the Crosstown Connector (Route 24), which serves the JWO Transit Center mid-route. Riders travelling between the JWO Transit Center and GCC can choose between four routes (20, 21, 24, and 41).

Note: The BlueLink Connector route (Route 22) has been out of service since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and is not included in this analysis.

Table 3. FRTA Fixed Routes

Route Number	Route Name	Service Type	Service Destinations
20	GreenLink Connector	Fixed Route	JWO Transit Center, County Fairgrounds, GCC, Greenfield High School and Middle School
21	Greenfield Community	Fixed Route	JWO Transit Center, GCC, Big Y, Registry of Motor Vehicles
23	Sunderland/Greenfield	Fixed Route	JWO Transit Center, Franklin Medical Center, Stop & Shop, Montague Center, Sugarloaf Estates
24	Crosstown Connector	Fixed Route	Food City, Stop & Shop, Franklin Medical Center, JWO Transit Center, GCC
31	Northampton/Greenfield	Fixed Route	JWO Transit Center, South Deerfield Center, Frontier High School, Big Y / Walmart Plaza, Academy of Music
32	Orange/Greenfield	Fixed Route	JWO Transit Center, Farren Care Center, Food City, West River Health Center, Walmart, Hannaford's
41	Charlemont/Greenfield	Fixed Route	JWO Transit Center, GCC, Big Y, Mohawk High School, Charlemont Center

Source: FRTA (2025)

4.1.1.2 Demand Response

FRTA operates several demand response programs including ADA Paratransit within ¾ mile of fixed routes, several non-ADA demand response services in most FRTA communities, microtransit (FRTA Access) open to the general public, and Med-Ride, which provides rides to individuals needing to travel outside of Franklin County for medical appointments. Passengers who wish to utilize demand response service must meet at least one of the following criteria: (1) persons 60 years or older, (2) nursing home resident, and/or (3) veteran with a disability rating of 70 percent or greater. Demand response services are primarily classified by the towns they serve, and many are operated by the local COA. FRTA has five microtransit Access zones; travel is restricted to within the zone unless otherwise stated. Figure 4 shows the location of FRTA Access zones. FRTA also uses volunteer drivers to operate the Med-Ride program, which provides out-of-county medical trips for ambulatory persons 60 years or over who reside in Franklin County. Table 4 summarizes demand response service provided.

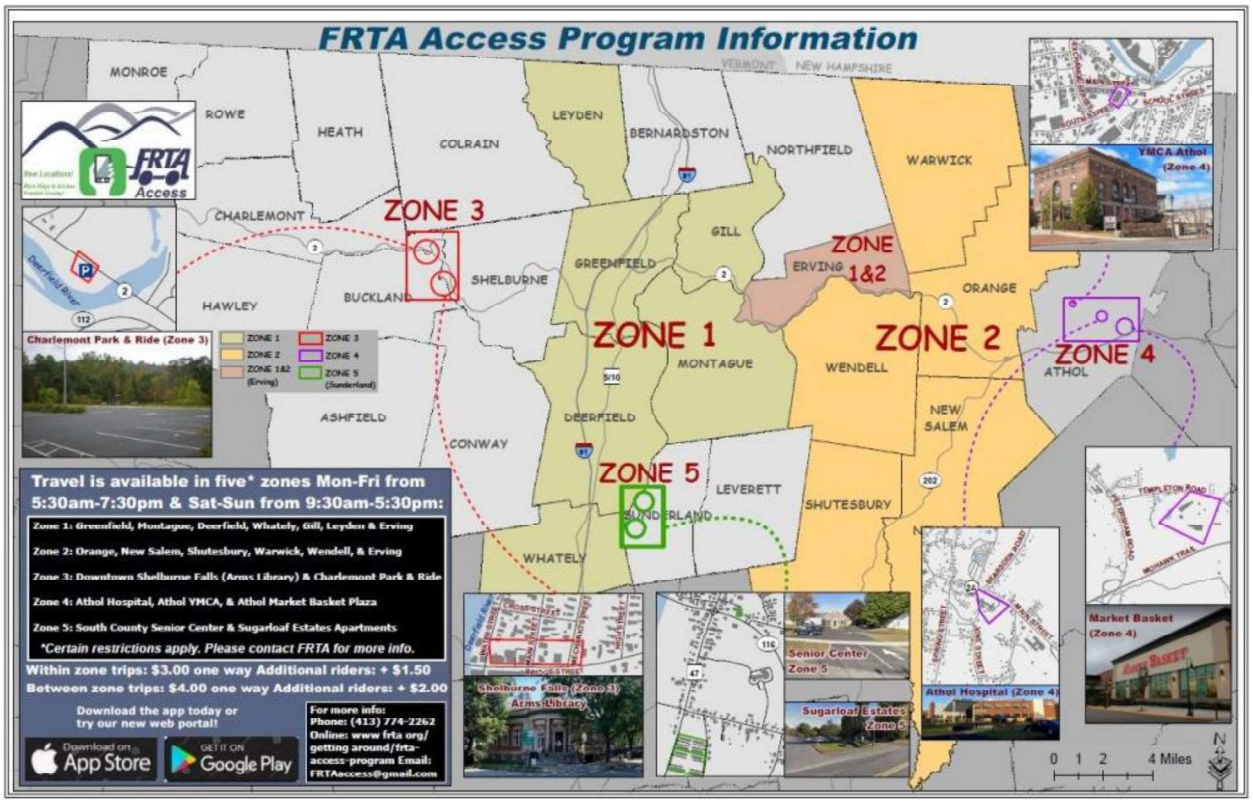
Table 4. FRTA Demand Response Service

Service Name	Demand Response Service Type	Service Destinations
Greenfield, Montague, Gill, Leyden	Non-ADA Demand Response	Demand response transportation for seniors in Greenfield, Montague, Gill, Leyden,
Deerfield and Whately	Non-ADA Demand Response	Demand response transportation for seniors in Deerfield, and Whately
Orange, New Salem, Shutesbury, Warwick, and Wendell	Non-ADA Demand Response	Demand response transportation for seniors in Orange, New Salem, Shutesbury, Warwick, and Wendell
Blandford, Chester, Huntington, Montgomery, and Russell	Non-ADA Demand Response	Demand response transportation for seniors in Blandford, Chester, Huntington, Montgomery, and Russell
Erving	Non-ADA Demand Response	Demand response transportation for seniors in Erving
Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery, Plainfield, Russell, and Worthington	Non-ADA Demand Response	Demand response transportation for seniors in Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery, Plainfield, Russell, and Worthington
Southampton	Non-ADA Demand Response	Demand response transportation for seniors in Southampton
Southwick	Non-ADA Demand Response	Demand response transportation for seniors in Southwick
Westhampton	Non-ADA Demand Response	Demand response transportation for seniors in Westhampton

Service Name	Demand Response Service Type	Service Destinations
Ashfield, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Conway, Hawley, Heath, Rowe, and Shelburne	Non-ADA Demand Response	Demand response transportation for seniors in Ashfield, Buckland Charlemont, Colrain, Conway, Hawley, Heath, Rowe, and Shelburne
Bernardston and Northfield	Non-ADA Demand Response	Demand response transportation for seniors in Bernardston and Northfield
ADA Paratransit	ADA Paratransit	Complementary ADA service within 3/4 mile of any fixed route
Med-Ride	Volunteer Drivers	Demand response transportation for seniors living in FRTA communities in Franklin County needing to travel to medical appointments outside of Franklin County
FRTA Access Zone 1	Microtransit	Deerfield, Erving, Gill, Greenfield, Leyden, Montague and Whately as well as Zone 5
FRTA Access Zone 2	Microtransit	Erving, New Salem, Orange, Shutesbury, Warwick and Wendell as well as Zone 5
FRTA Access Zone 3	Microtransit	Arms Library in Shelburne Falls or the Charlemont Park and Ride
FRTA Access Zone 4	Microtransit	Athol Hospital, Athol YMCA and Market Basket Plaza
FRTA Access Zone 5	Microtransit	South County Senior Center (Sunderland) & Sugarloaf Estates as well as anywhere in Zone 1 or 2

Source: FRTA (2025)

Figure 4. FRTA Access Program



Source: FRTA (2025)

4.1.2 Provided Service

FRTA fixed route service hours range from 5:00 AM to 7:30 PM on weekdays and 9:30 AM to 5:30 PM on weekends, with each route operating on a unique schedule within those windows. All routes run seven days per week. Weekday services are more frequent than weekend services on most routes, though Routes 23, 31, and 32 operate on a 2 hour schedule every day. Route 24 makes an hourly loop on weekdays, but service on the weekend consists of one trip between Turners Falls (a village in the northern section of Montague) and Greenfield in the morning and a return trip in the evening. Route 41 makes four loops per weekday, departing the JWO Transit Center at 7:00 AM, 11:00 AM, 2:45 PM, and 5:00 PM. On the weekends, Route 41 departs from the JWO Transit Center at 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM. Detailed service and frequency information for fixed route service is provided in Table 5.

Table 5. FRTA Span of Service and Frequency

Route Number	Weekday Service Hours	Saturday Service Hours	Sunday Service Hours	Weekday Headway	Saturday Headway	Sunday Headway	Days Operated
20	6:15 AM – 9:55 AM	9:30 AM – 4:25 PM	9:30 AM – 4:25 PM	30-40 minutes	120 minutes	120 minutes	7
21	8:00 AM – 7:30 PM	9:30 AM – 4:30 PM	9:30 AM – 4:30 PM	60 minutes	120 minutes	120 minutes	7
23	6:45 AM – 7:30 PM	10:00 AM – 3:30 PM	10:00 AM – 3:30 PM	120 minutes	120 minutes	120 minutes	7

Route Number	Weekday Service Hours	Saturday Service Hours	Sunday Service Hours	Weekday Headway	Saturday Headway	Sunday Headway	Days Operated
24	7:15 AM – 7:20 PM	9:30 AM – 4:30 PM	9:30 AM – 4:30 PM	60 minutes	1 trip per AM and PM	1 trip per AM and PM	7
31	5:15 AM – 6:40 PM	10:00 AM – 3:30 PM	10:00 AM – 3:30 PM	120 minutes	120 minutes	120 minutes	7
32	5:00 AM – 6:45 PM	10:00 AM – 3:45 PM	10:00 AM – 3:45 PM	120 minutes	120 minutes	120 minutes	7
41	7:00 AM – 6:25 PM	10:00 AM – 5:25 PM	10:00 AM – 5:25 PM	4 trips per day	1 trip per AM and PM	1 trip per AM and PM	7

Source: FRTA (2025)

FRTA demand response service hours range from 5:30 AM to 7:30 PM on weekdays and 9:30 AM to 5:30 PM on weekends. FRTA Access service, and select demand response services, are available seven days a week. Two services operate "as needed" without specific service hours- FRTA's volunteer Med-Ride program and Westhampton service. Detailed service and frequency information for fixed route service is provided in Table 6.

Table 6. FRTA Demand Response Span of Service

Service	Weekday Service Hours	Saturday Service Hours	Sunday Service Hours
Greenfield, Montague, Gill, Leyden	5:30 AM – 7:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM
Deerfield and Whately	5:30 AM – 7:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM
Orange, New Salem, Shutesbury, Warwick, and Wendell	5:30 AM – 7:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM
Blandford, Chester, Huntington, Montgomery, and Russell	9:00 AM – 5:00 PM (Monday) [Medical] 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM (Tuesday) [Huntington Health Center] 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM (Tuesday) [Shopping] 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM (Wednesday) [Medical and other Appointments] 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM (Thursday) [Shopping in Westfield]	N/A	N/A
Erving	9:00 AM – 3:00 PM	N/A	N/A

Service	Weekday Service Hours	Saturday Service Hours	Sunday Service Hours
Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery, Plainfield, Russell, and Worthington	8:30 AM – 4:30 PM	N/A	N/A
Southwick	8:30 AM – 4:00 PM (Monday-Thursday) [Appointments in Springfield] 8:30 AM – 2:00 PM (Tuesday) [Shopping in Westfield] 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM (Wednesday) [Shopping in Westfield] 8:30 AM – 2:00 PM (Friday) [Shopping in Southwick]	N/A	N/A
Southampton	7:00 AM – 5:00 PM	N/A	N/A
Westhampton	As needed	N/A	N/A
Ashfield, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Conway, Hawley, Heath, Rowe, and Shelburne	5:30 AM – 7:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM
Bernardston and Northfield	9:00 AM – 3:00 PM	N/A	N/A
ADA Paratransit	Same as fixed route	Same as fixed route	Same as fixed route
Med-Ride	As requested	N/A	N/A
FRTA Access Zone 1	5:30 AM – 7:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM
FRTA Access Zone 2	5:30 AM – 7:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM
FRTA Access Zone 3	5:30 AM – 7:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM
FRTA Access Zone 4	5:30 AM – 7:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM
FRTA Access Zone 5	5:30 AM – 7:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM	9:30 AM – 5:30 PM

Source: FRTA (2025)
N/A = Not Applicable

4.1.3 Funding

Table 7 summarizes operating revenue for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 through FY 2024. As shown, total operating revenues ranged between approximately $4.3 million in FY 2022 and $4.8 million in FY 2024. The primary source of operating revenue in FY 2024 was State of Massachusetts funding, which accounted for about 50 percent of FRTA funds, up from 28 percent the previous year. This increase is the result of additional state funds to support the Try Transit program to offer fare-free transit service and an increase in state contract assistance for operations.

Federal funding has varied from year to year, from 30 percent in FY 2024 to 51 percent in FY 2023. Federal funding for FRTA is provided through the FTA Section 5311 Program for rural transit operators and is administered by the state. As direct state funding increased, federal funding decreased proportionally, so the overall combined contribution remained at about 80 percent of total funding.

Farebox funding was highest in FY 2022 with nearly $59,000 collected in fares. Fare revenue increased again in FY 2023 before declining slightly in FY 2024. In May 2025, FRTA officially suspended fares permanently for fixed route service and suspended fares for demand response service through June 2026. FRTA continues to collect fares for FRTA Access microtransit service. Partnerships and contracts include revenue collected from Lifepath, Stop & Shop, and Big Y.

Table 7. FRTA Operating Funding Sources (FY 2022-FY 2024)

Funding Source	FY 2022	Percentage of FY 2022	FY 2023	Percentage of FY 2023	FY 2024	Percentage of FY 2024
Federal	$1,908,283	44%	$2,388,629	51%	$1,452,681	30%
State	$1,493,707	34%	$1,300,251	28%	$2,410,854	50%
Local	$520,680	12%	$570,000	12%	$584,250	12%
Farebox	$58,512	1%	$88,174	2%	$73,126	2%
Partnerships & Contracts	$33,635	1%	$35,698	1%	$34,324	1%
Other[a]	$316,522	7%	$296,249	6%	$245,611	5%
TOTAL	$4,331,339	100%	$4,679,000	100%	$4,800,846	100%

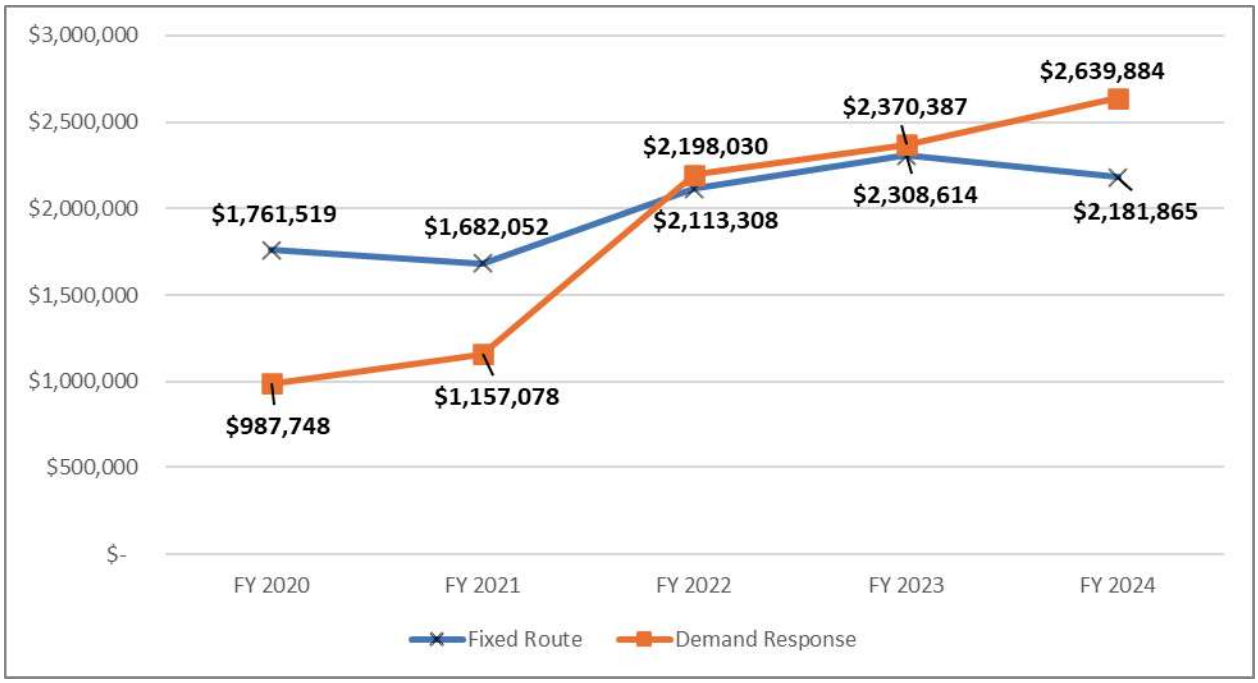
Source: FRTA (2025)
[a] Other includes interest, rental income, advertising, and Regional Transit Authority Assistance Program funds.

The annual operating cost for fixed route service decreased approximately 5 percent between FY 2020 and FY 2021 before increasing again year-over-year to FY 2024 (Figure 5). Costs increased significantly between FY 2021 and FY 2022 (about 26 percent) and increased an additional 9 percent between FY 2022 and FY 2023. On a cost per revenue hour basis, the biggest increase in operating costs occurred between FY 2020 and FY 2021. This followed national inflation trends; during this time, costs for goods and services increased across the board at a significantly higher rate than normal. Overall, operating costs for fixed route service increased 23.9 percent between FY 2020 and FY 2024.

Demand response operating costs also trended upward from FY 2020 to FY 2024 but at an even higher rate. Between FY 2020 and FY 2024, costs for demand response increased by

167.3 percent. This is partly the result of new demand taxi service. FRTA started offering demand taxi service in FY 2022 under the Employment Transportation program using grant funding, which contributed to the increased demand response costs between FY 2021 and FY 2022.

Figure 5. FRTA Annual Operating Cost by Mode (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: MassDOT (2025)

Table 8 shows farebox and contract revenue for FRTA, by year. Fixed route service was partially fare free in FY 2022 and fully fare free in FY 2023 and FY 2024. Prior to the implementation of fare-free service, FRTA collected nearly $7,600 in fares for bus service and approximately $89,000 for demand response service.

Demand response service revenue was lowest in FY 2022—approximately half of FY 2020 revenue. Demand response revenue increased in FY 2024, surpassing FY 2020 amounts. Despite increases in demand response revenue collected, total revenue in FY 2024 was approximately 55 percent of FY 2020 total revenue. Farebox revenue for demand response taxi service was highest in FY 2023.

Table 8. Farebox Revenue by Fiscal Year and Service Type (FY 2020 – FY 2024)

Funding Source	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Bus	$98,580	$7,597	$410	$0	$0
Demand Response	$109,402	$89,389	$54,502	$69,998	$113,156
Demand Response Taxi	$0	$0	$4,960	$8,536	$2,201
TOTAL	**$207,982**	**$96,986**	**$59,872**	**$78,534**	**$115,357**

Source: FRTA (2025)

Sources for capital expenditures are shown in Table 9. The share of state funding for capital expenses was highest in FY 2022, greater than 95 percent of total funding. The source of remaining funding was federal funding. In FY 2023 and FY 2024, state funding comprised a smaller percentage of overall funding compared to FY 2022. FY 2023 had the highest share of

federal funds (approximately 64 percent); this is because FRTA received $6 million in Section 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities formula funding to open the new garage/bus maintenance facility in Turners Falls that year.

Table 9. FRTA Capital Expenditures Sources (FY 2022-FY 2024)

Funding Source	FY 2022	Percentage of FY 2022	FY 2023	Percentage of FY 2023	FY 2024	Percentage of FY 2024
Federal	$266,639	4.73%	$6,046,540	63.69%	$850,667	24.20%
State	$5,374,064	95.27%	$3,446,748	36.31%	$2,663,910	75.80%
Local	$0	0.00%	$0	0.00%	$0	0.00%
Farebox	$0	0.00%	$0	0.00%	$0	0.00%
Other	$0	0.00%	$0	0.00%	$0	0.00%
TOTAL	$5,640,703	100.00%	$9,493,288	100.00%	$3,514,577	100.00%

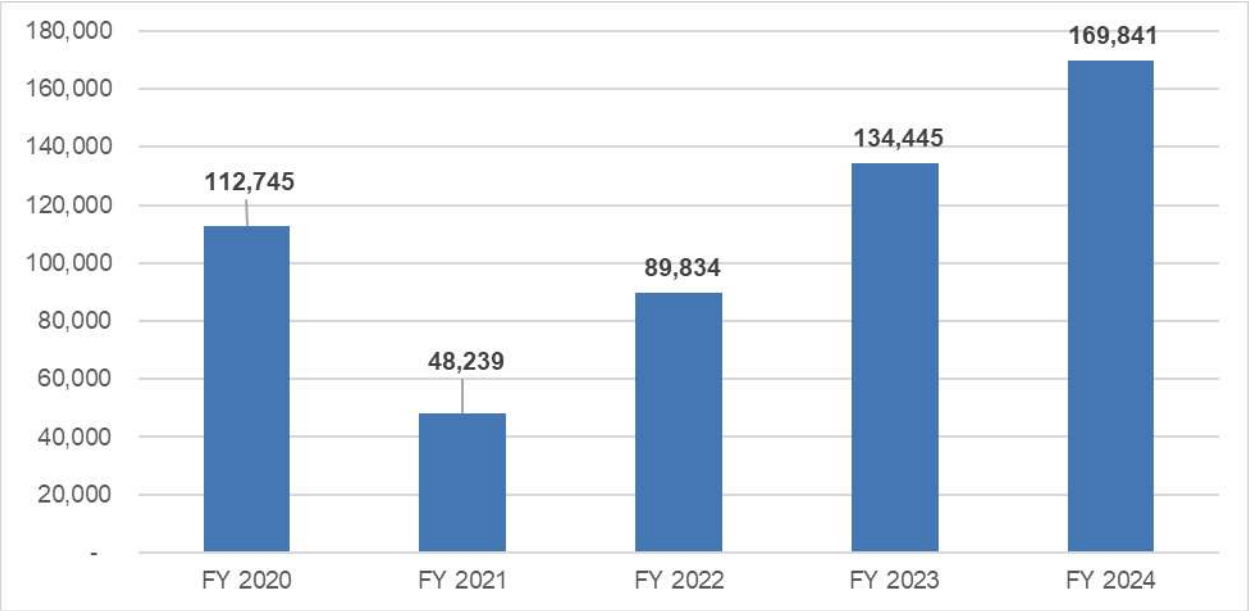
Source: NTD (2024)

FRTA also previously received COVID-era federal funding in the form of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (which had to be obligated by May 11th, 2023), Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (obligated by September 30, 2023) and American Rescue Plan Act funding (which had to be obligated by September 30th, 2024). These fund sources could be used by the RTA for both capital and operating expenses. The FRTA may have expended these funds before or after these fund source obligation deadlines, depending on the use of the funds for capital and/or operating expenses.

4.2 Ridership and Service Operations

FRTA's overall system ridership, inclusive of all modes, experienced a sharp decline between FY 2020 and FY 2021, dropping over 57 percent (Figure 6), reflecting travel shifts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Ridership began to recover in FY 2022, and system ridership has since surpassed FY 2020 levels. Between FY 2021 and FY 2022, ridership increased by over 77 percent, though this growth has since slowed. Between FY 2022 and FY 2023, ridership increased by over 57 percent and ridership increased again from FY 2023 to FY 2024 by 26 percent. This growth is likely the result of FRTA's suspension of fares for fixed route service and the introduction of new weekend service. Overall, FY 2024 ridership was approximately 51 percent higher than FY 2020 ridership.

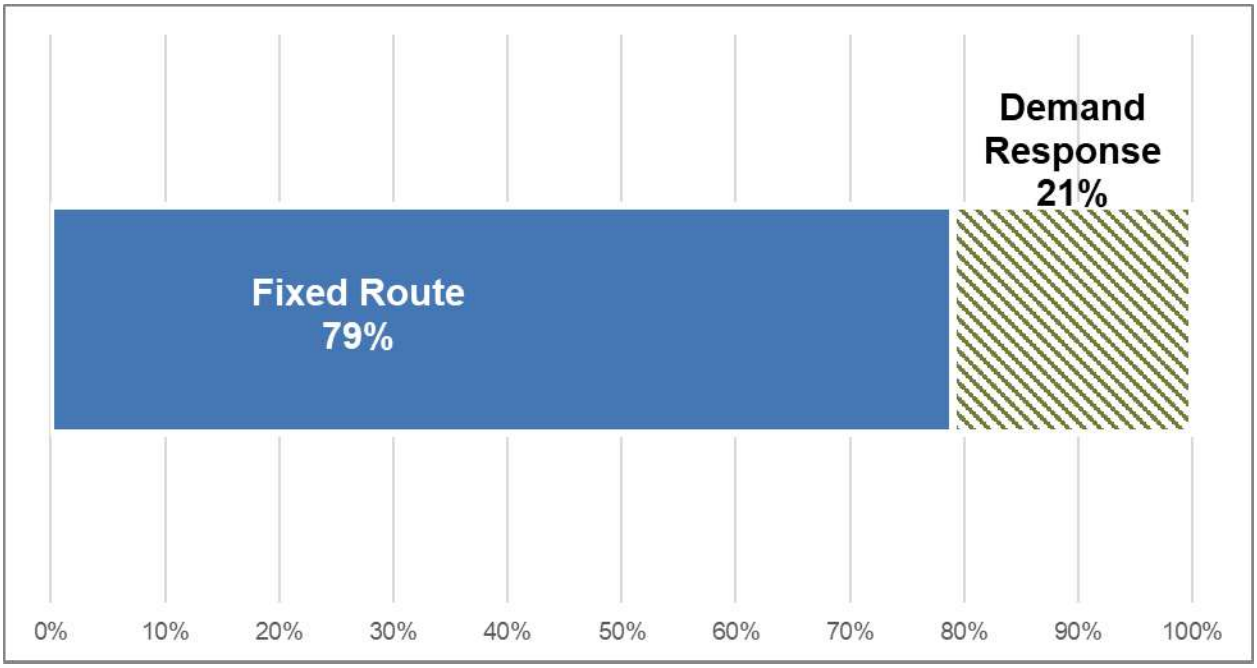
Figure 6. FRTA Annual System Ridership (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: MassDOT (2025)

In FY 2024, FRTA provided the majority of trips on its fixed bus routes, with 21 percent of trips taken on demand response services (Figure 7).

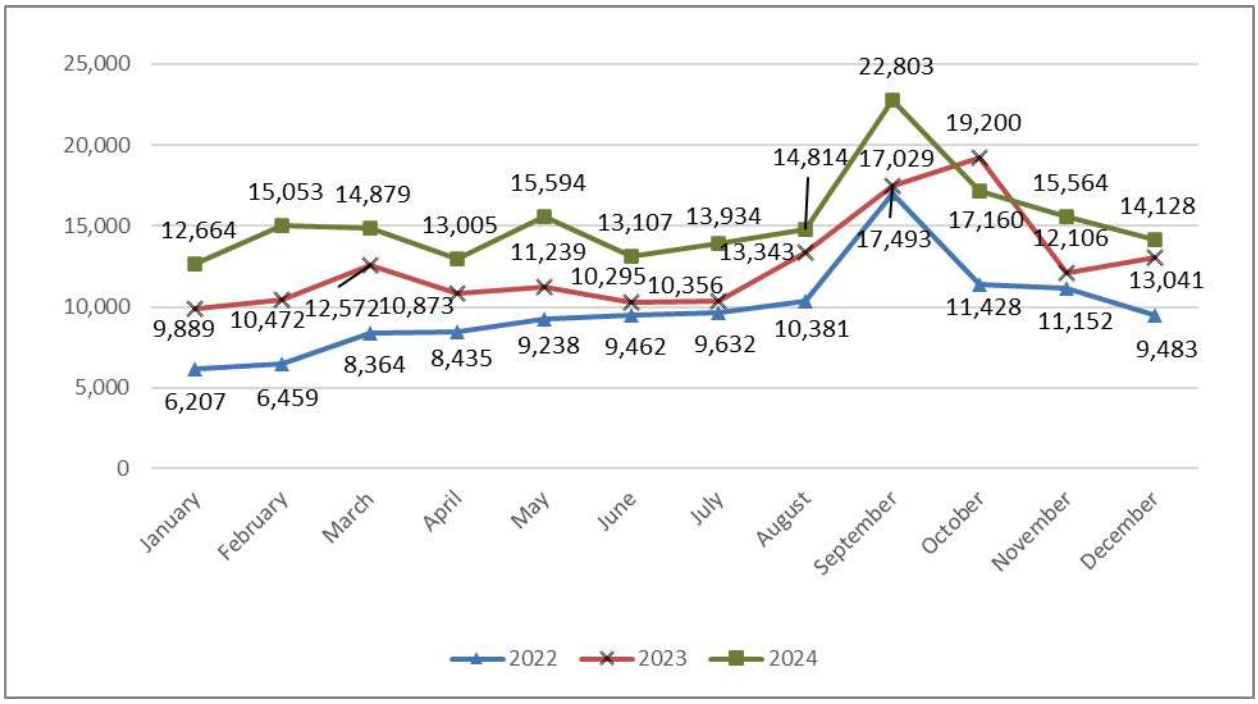
Figure 7. FRTA Ridership Breakdown by Service Type (FY 2024)



Source: MassDOT (2025)

Monthly ridership data from 2022 to 2024 indicates that ridership is generally lowest in the summer months and January and highest in the fall from September through November (Figure 8). This trend is likely the result of student school-based trips to GCC and other education institutions.

Figure 8. FRTA Monthly Ridership Trends (2022-2024)

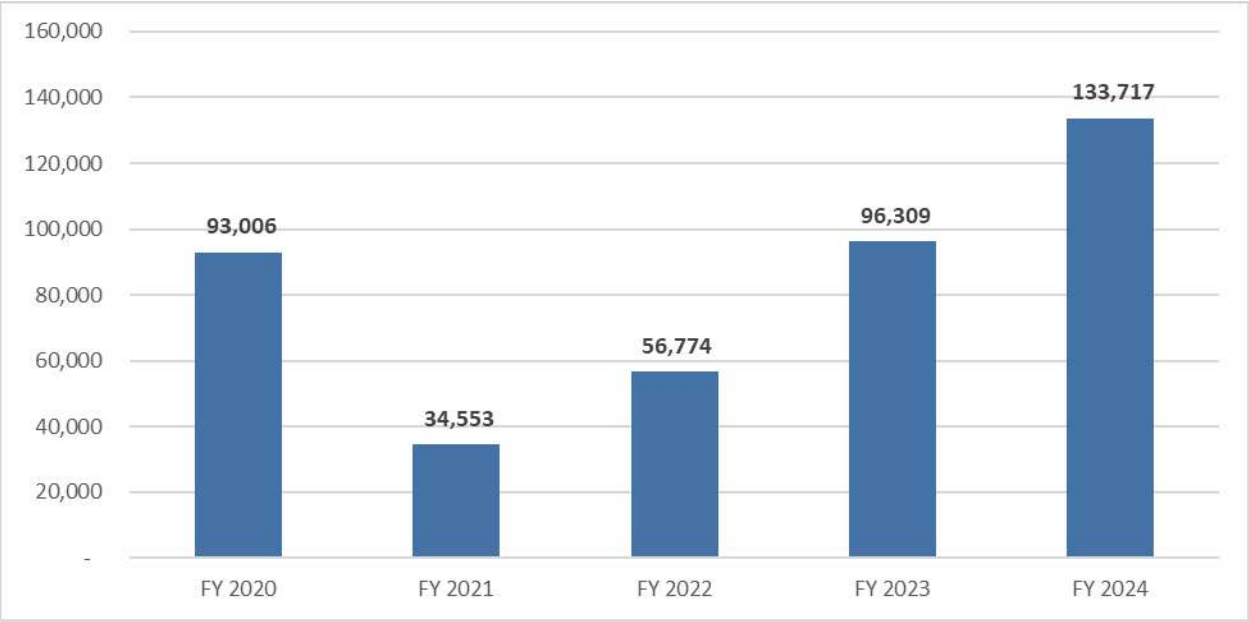


Source: MassDOT (2025)

4.2.1 Fixed Route Ridership

Fixed route ridership experienced a low in FY 2021 with a total of about 35,000 riders (Figure 9). Ridership rebounded in FY 2022 to reach about 57,000 riders. Ridership for fixed route grew again in FY 2023 to over 96,000 and in FY 2024, ridership rose to a total rider count of approximately 134,000 riders. The average annual growth rate for fixed route ridership was 72 percent between FY 2021 and FY 2024. Overall, ridership grew by approximately 44 percent from FY 2020 to FY 2024.

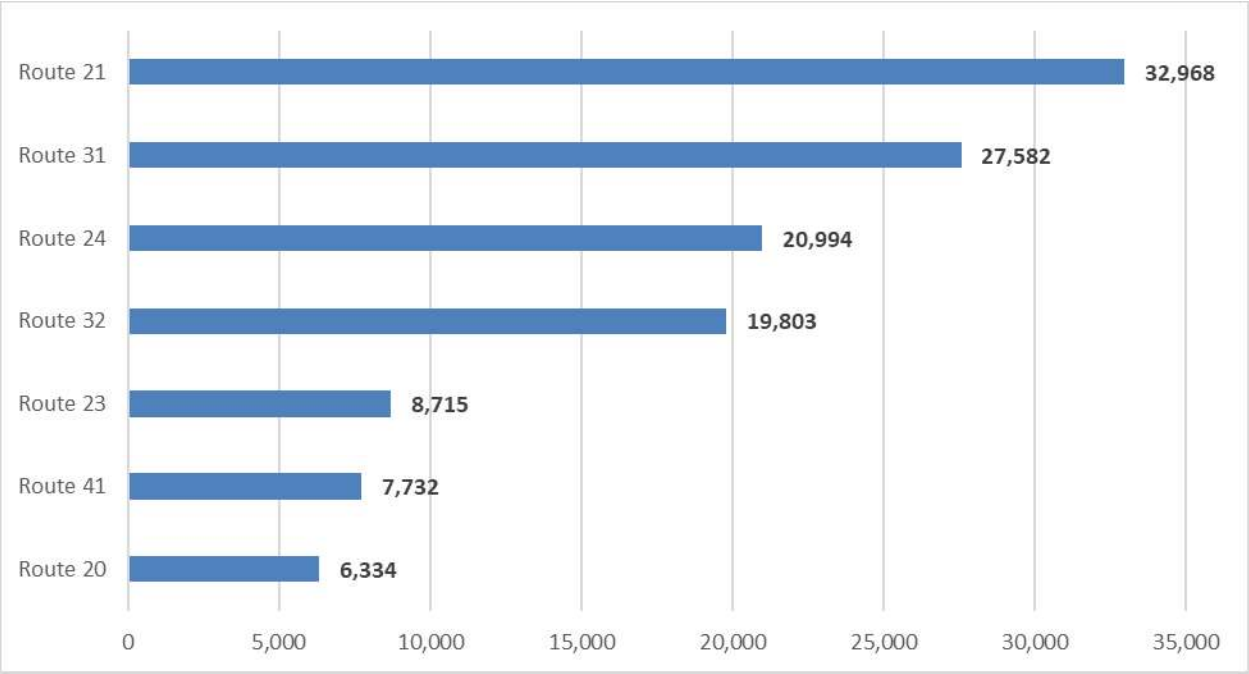
Figure 9. Fixed Route Annual Ridership (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: FRTA (2025)

FRTA collects ridership data at the route level, though it does not separately record weekday versus weekend trips. Route 21 Greenfield Community was the highest ridership route in FY 2024 with nearly 33,000 riders (Figure 10). Route 31 Northampton/Greenfield was the next highest ridership route, followed by the Route 24 Crosstown Connector (Montague-Greenfield). Route 21 operates in a counterclockwise loop, in tandem with the Route 20 Green Link Connector, which operates in the clockwise direction. Route 31 extends from the JWO Transit Center south to downtown Northampton via Deerfield. Finally, Route 24 extends eastward from GCC to central Turners Falls via the JWO Transit Center.

Figure 10. Annual Ridership by Route (FY 2024)

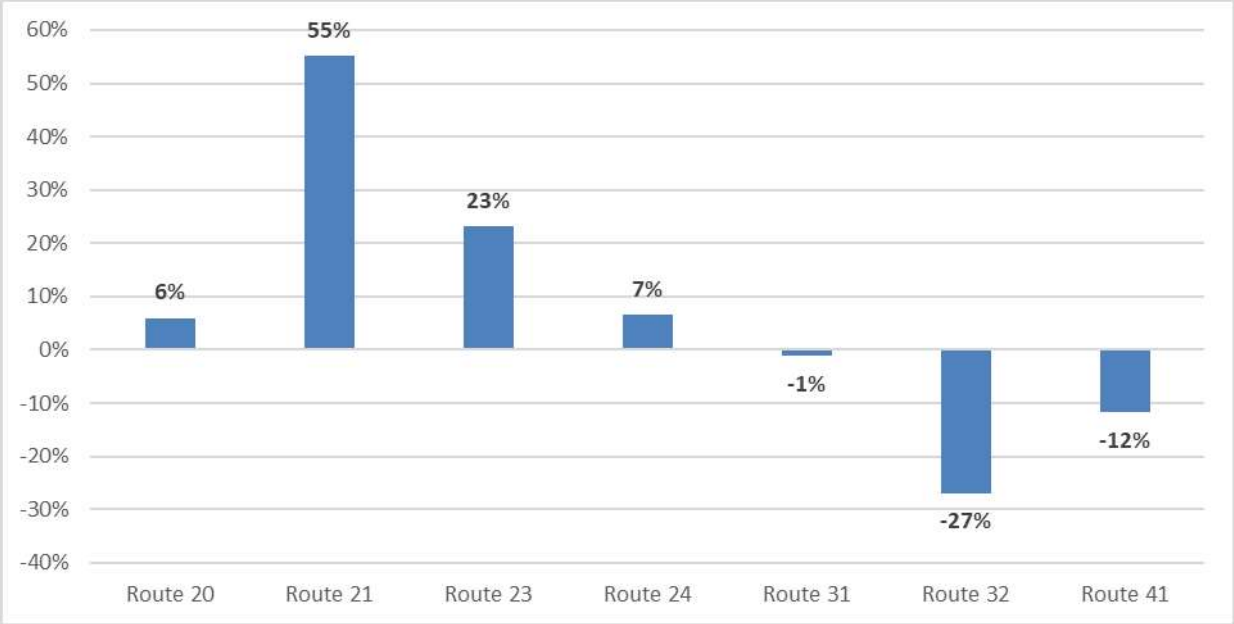


Source: FRTA (2025)

The fixed routes with the highest increases in annual ridership between FY 2019 and FY 2024 were Route 21 and Route 23 (Figure 11). Route 21 was also FRTA's highest ridership route for FY 2024, serving the local Greenfield area as a one-directional loop route. Route 21 serves key local destinations including GCC, Greenfield High School, Greenfield Middle School, and Big Y shopping center. Route 23 operates between the JWO Transit Center and the communities of Turners Falls, Millers Falls, Montague, and Sunderland. At the end of the route, passengers are able to transfer to Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) service via PVTA Route 31.

Three routes experienced ridership decreases from FY 2019 to FY 2024 including Route 32, Route 41, and Route 31. Route 32 Orange/Greenfield extends from the JWO Transit Center in Greenfield to Orange via Turners Falls and Millers Falls. The route serves several shopping destinations including a Walmart as well as Hannaford and Food City grocery stores. Route 41 Charlemont/Greenfield starts at the JWO Transit Center and travels westward to Charlemont Center via GCC and Shelburne Falls. Finally, Route 31, which was one of the highest ridership routes in FY 2024, experienced a slight decline in ridership (1 percent) from FY 2019 to FY 2024. This route travels between Greenfield and Northampton.

Figure 11. Annual Ridership Change (FY 2019-FY 2024)



Source: FRTA (2025 and 2020)

4.2.2 Fixed Route Operations

FRTA's annual fixed route operating statistics are shown in Table 10. Aside from the drop in ridership from FY 2020 to FY 2021, ridership increased year-to-year between FY 2020 and FY 2024. As described previously, ridership surpassed FY 2020 levels in FY 2023, likely as a result of fare-free service. Revenue hours have also increased over time, peaking in FY 2024 with nearly 3,000 additional annual hours. Revenue miles have similarly increased, peaking in FY 2024 as well. Operating costs for fixed route operations increased steadily throughout the entire five-year period, rising an average of 4.8 percent annually.

Table 10. Annual Fixed Route Operating Statistics (FY 2020-FY 2024)

Statistic	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Ridership	93,006	34,553	56,774	96,309	133,717
Revenue Hours	13,774	9,303	13,977	16,244	16,988
Revenue Miles	348,818	256,229	314,485	399,367	428,181
Operating Costs	$1,761,519	$1,682,052	$2,113,308	$2,308,614	$2,181,865

Source: FRTA (2025), NTD (2024)

FRTA's operating statistics for fixed routes in FY 2024 are shown by route in Table 11. FRTA tracks operating cost and revenue hours but not revenue miles at the route-level. As identified previously, Route 21 and Route 31 were the highest performing routes when considering overall ridership and passengers per hour. Route 32, which connects Greenfield to Orange, had the highest total operating cost, though not the highest operating cost per passenger trip. The route with the highest operating cost per passenger trip in FY 2024 was Route 23, which operates between Greenfield and Sunderland.

Table 11. Operating Statistics by Route (FY 2024)

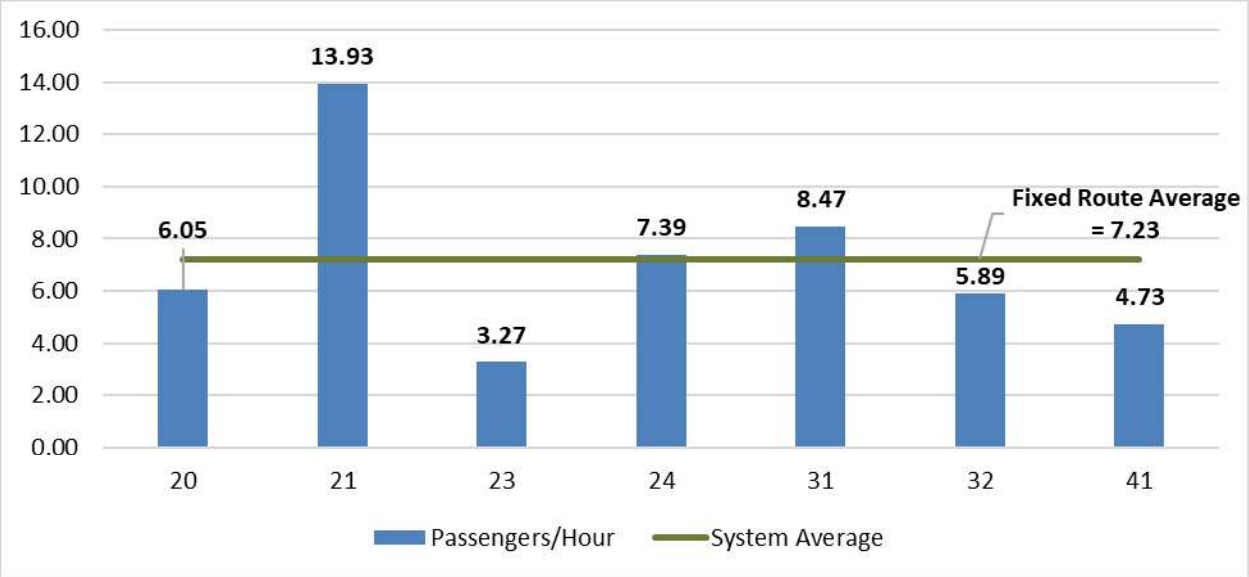
Route	Ridership	Revenue Hours	Passenger Trips/ Hour	Operating Cost	Operating Cost/ Passenger
20	6,334	1,047	6.05	$131,118	$20.70
21	32,968	2,368	13.93	$295,663	$8.97
23	8,715	2,667	3.27	$332,090	$38.11
24	20,994	2,840	7.39	$353,631	$16.84
31	27,582	3,255	8.47	$400,956	$14.54
32	19,803	3,362	5.89	$418,737	$21.15
41	7,732	1,635	4.73	$203,598	$26.33

Source: FRTA (2025)
Note: Difference in ridership is due to collection methods.

At a system level, FRTA's fixed routes served an average of over seven passengers per hour during FY 2024 (Figure 12). A few routes carried a higher number of passengers per hour, with Route 21 and Route 31 representing the top two highest performing routes based on this metric. These two routes are the highest ridership routes for FRTA with Route 21 providing local circulator service to Greenfield and Route 31 providing a connection between Greenfield and Northampton.

Two routes were significantly below the system average: Route 23 accounted for the lowest ridership per hour, followed by Route 41. Ridership for Route 23 increased between FY 2019 and FY 2024, though Route 41 experienced a decline in ridership from FY 2019 to FY 2024.

Figure 12. Passengers per Hour by Route (FY 2024)

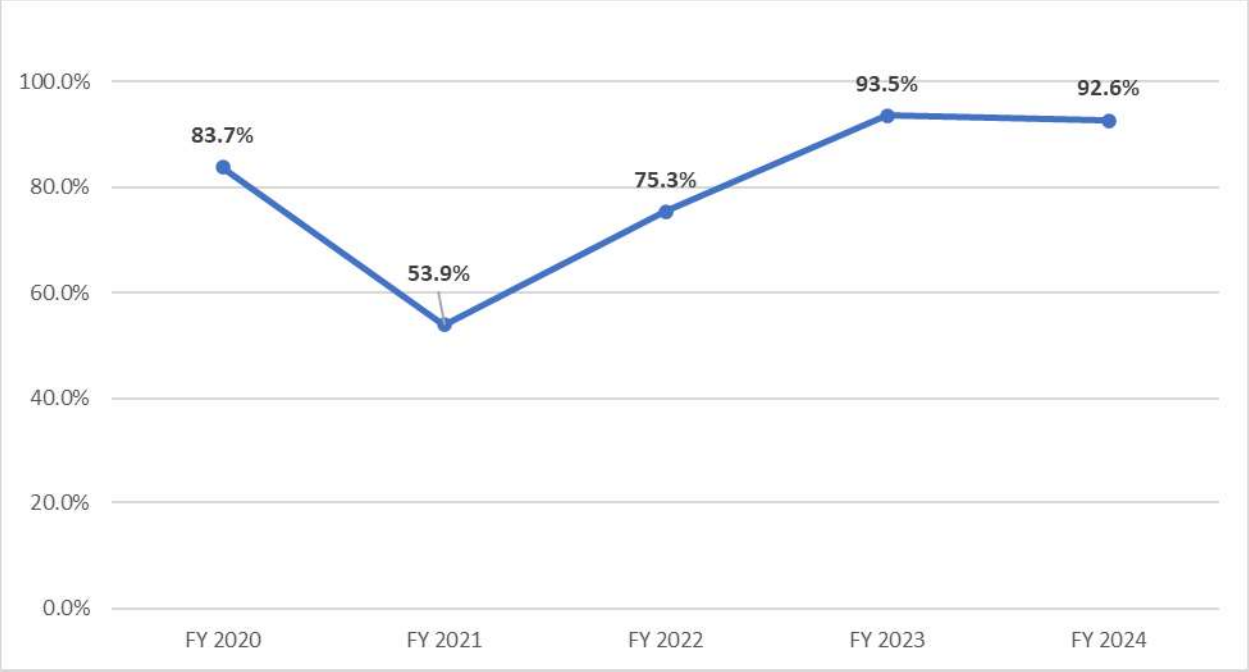


Source: FRTA (2025)

Note: Passengers per hour average is based on route level data and may differ from system level data due to a difference in how data are collected and reported at the route and mode level.

FRTA operated over 92 percent of scheduled trips in FY 2024 (Figure 13). The highest percentage of trips operated was in FY 2023 with 93.5 percent and the lowest was in FY 2021 with 53.9 percent. Complications arising from the COVID-19 pandemic impacted FRTA's ability to operate scheduled trips in FY 2021. FRTA was able to improve operations in FY 2022 and again in FY 2023.

Figure 13. FRTA Percentage of Fixed Route Scheduled Trips Operated (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: FRTA (2025)

4.2.3 Demand Response Ridership and Operations

FRTA provides ADA paratransit service within a ¾-mile area surrounding each fixed route, as well as non-ADA paratransit service for older adults and people with disabilities in each of the member communities. Demand response ridership represented 21 percent of the overall system ridership in FY 2024.

FRTA's annual operating statistics for demand response are broken down in Table 12. Revenue hours, revenue miles, and operating costs all dipped from FY 2020 to FY 2021 in parallel with ridership trends but increased annually since that year. Overall, operating costs grew an average of 15.7 percent annually over the five-year period.

Table 12. Demand Response Operating Statistics (FY 2020-FY 2024)

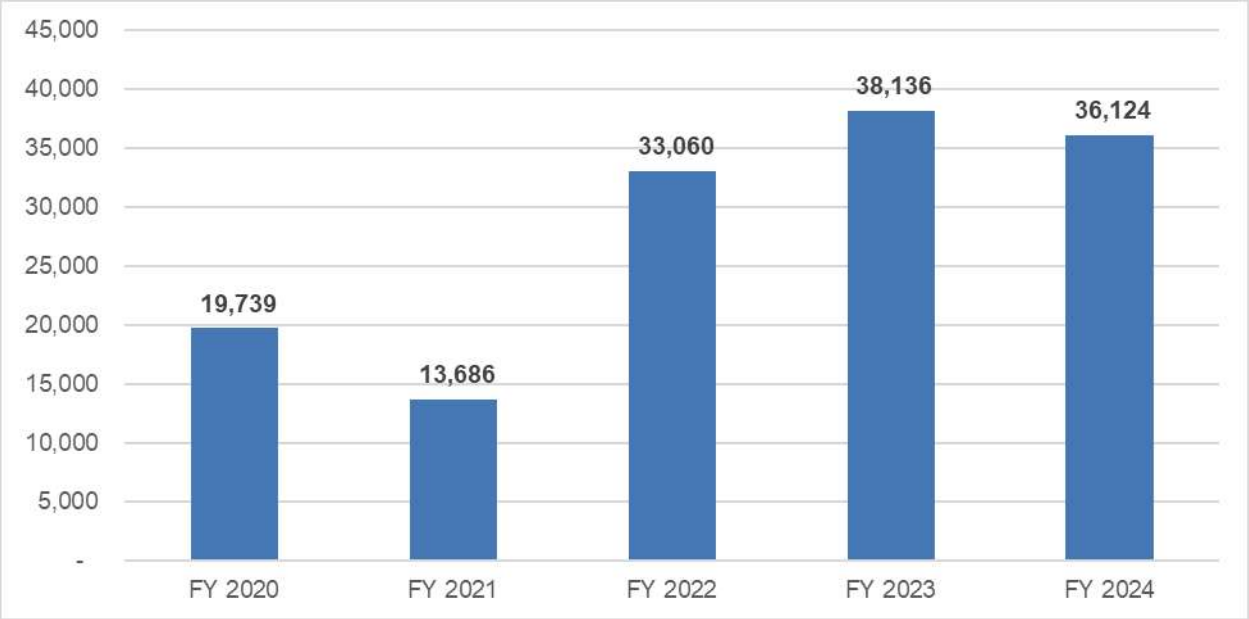
Statistic	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Ridership	19,739	13,686	33,060	38,136	36,124
Revenue Hours	12,003	9,230	16,201	18,656	19,331
Revenue Miles	152,537	114,342	241,682	299,174	302,222

Statistic	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Operating Costs	$987,748	$1,157,078	$2,198,030	$2,370,387	$2,639,884

Source: FRTA (2025), NTD (2024)

Annual demand response ridership dipped in FY 2021 but increased year-to-year since (Figure 14). Ridership rose to over 38,000 riders in FY 2023 — more than a 15 percent increase from FY 2022. In FY 2024, ridership decreased following the suspension of demand taxi service.

Figure 14. Demand Response Annual Ridership (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: FRTA (2025), MassDOT (2025)

FRTA's demand response service tracks the number of missed trips, no-shows, cancellations, and denials. FRTA uses the following definitions for each of these cases:

- Missed trips: When the vehicle never arrives, or arrives beyond the 20-minute pickup window, and the customer chooses to not take the trip.
- No-show: When the vehicle arrives at a location within the pickup window and the customer is not present or cancels at the door.
- Cancellation: When the passenger calls to cancel the trip before the vehicle arrives.
- Denials: When a trip is scheduled within operating hours and service area that could not be accommodated.

FRTA's annual demand response metrics are broken down in Table 13. As seen in the table, FRTA had relatively high rates of denied trips. This could be due to vehicle capacity constraints or driver shortages to complete trips.

Table 13. Demand Response Metrics (FY 2020-FY 2024)

Metric	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Average Completed Trips/Passenger	25.49	21.19	31.86	31.41	36.05

Metric	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
% Denied Trips	0.58%	2.33%	8.36%	7.75%	8.19%
% No-shows	2.77%	2.83%	2.98%	4.49%	4.13%
% Missed Trips	0.17%	0.21%	0.37%	0.52%	0.46%

Source: FRTA (2025)

4.2.4 Transit Service Performance

The following section provides information on FRTA's systemwide performance trends for fixed route and demand response services from FY 2020 to FY 2024. Transit service performance is evaluated in two categories: service effectiveness and financial performance. A comparison with transit systems across Massachusetts (excluding MBTA) and the national average for rural agencies is also provided.

4.2.4.1 Service Effectiveness

Service effectiveness describes the amount of transit service utilized per unit amount of transit service that is provided. Service effectiveness is measured using two indicators: passengers per mile and passengers per hour.

- Passengers per mile measures the average number of unlinked passenger trips (UPTs) taken for every vehicle revenue mile (VRM) provided. Though the passengers per mile indicator is a strong measure of system efficiency, it is also influenced by the length of passenger trips. Smaller values likely represent longer trips where passengers are travelling greater distances or poorly performing routes. Larger values likely represent shorter trips where passengers are traveling smaller distances or high-performing routes.
- Passengers per hour measures the average number of UPTs taken for every vehicle revenue hour (VRH) provided. Passengers per hour is influenced by the geographic area and the average operating speed of a route. Higher values indicate a more efficient system.

Service effectiveness for FRTA's fixed route and demand response services from 2020 to 2024 is illustrated in Table 14. Service effectiveness for fixed route declined from FY 2020 to FY 2021 as a result of the pandemic, then recovered from FY 2022 to FY 2024. FRTA exceeded its FY 2024 fixed route service effectiveness targets. Both passengers per mile and passengers per hour were higher in FY 2024 compared to FY 2020, and both fixed route metrics were significantly lower than national and state averages. In FY 2024, FRTA served 0.31 passengers per mile, while the state average was 1.01 and the national rural average was 0.58. Likewise, in FY 2024, FRTA served 6.75 passengers per revenue hour, while the state average was 13.72 and the national rural average was 9.99. These differences are not surprising given that FRTA serves one of the most rural, dispersed areas in the state.

For demand response service, FRTA's service effectiveness more closely aligns with state and national averages. FRTA's passengers per mile peaked in FY 2022 with 0.14, slightly higher than both FY 2020 (0.13) and FY 2024 (0.12). In 2024, the state average was 0.12 and the national rural average was 0.13. Passengers per hour peaked in FY 2022 and FY 2023 with 2.04 and decreased slightly in FY 2024 to 1.87. In 2024, the state average was 1.95 and the national rural average was 2.13. Unlike fixed route service, FRTA did not meet its demand response service effectiveness targets for FY 2024.

Table 14. Service Effectiveness (FY 2020-FY 2024)

Productivity Metric	Fixed Route Passengers/ Mile	Fixed Route Passengers/ Hour	Demand Response Passengers/ Mile	Demand Response Passengers/ Hour
FY 2020	0.27	6.75	0.13	1.64
FY 2021	0.13	3.71	0.12	1.48
FY 2022	0.18	4.06	0.14	2.04
FY 2023	0.24	5.93	0.13	2.04
FY 2024	0.31	7.87	0.12	1.87
FRTA FY 2024 Targets	0.25	6.35	0.17	2.50
FY 2024 Massachusetts Average [a]	1.25	17.87	0.12	1.95
FY 2024 National Rural Average	0.58	9.99	0.13	2.13

Source: NTD
[a] Massachusetts average excludes MBTA (from all modes).

4.2.4.2 Financial Performance

Cost effectiveness is a measure of a transit system's performance in financial terms, indicating the effectiveness of dollars invested in the transit system at producing trips. Many variables influence the financial efficiency of a transit agency, including the size and other characteristics of the geographic area served, ridership, the cost of labor, and more. Cost effectiveness indicators are cost per mile, cost per hour, and cost per passenger.

- Cost per mile measures the overall expense of providing a transit service divided by the number of VRMs provided by the service. A smaller value indicates more financially efficient service and/or faster operating speeds.
- Cost per hour measures the overall expense of providing a service divided by the number of VRHs provided by the service. A smaller value indicates more financially efficient service and/or faster operating speeds.
- Cost per passenger measures the overall expenses required to operate the transit service divided by the number of UPTs that were taken on the service. A smaller value indicates a financially efficient service and/or high ridership.

Fixed Route Financial Performance

Table 15 illustrates the cost effectiveness of FRTA's fixed route services from FY 2020 to FY 2024. FRTA's operating cost per mile peaked in FY 2021. Costs per mile in FY 2024 were lower than both state and national averages, as were costs per hour. However, FRTA's cost per passenger for FY 2024 ($16.32) was higher than the national rural average of $11.13 and more than double the state average of $7.93 per passenger. Like the service effectiveness metrics, given the rural, dispersed nature of the FRTA service area, the large differences compared to state and national averages are expected. FRTA also did not meet its FY 2024 cost effectiveness targets for cost per mile and cost per hour, though it did meet its cost per passenger target.

Table 15. Cost Effectiveness - Fixed Route (FY 2020-FY 2024)

Cost Effectiveness Metric	Cost/Mile	Cost/Hour	Cost/Passenger
FY 2020	$5.05	$127.89	$18.94
FY 2021	$6.56	$180.81	$48.68
FY 2022	$6.72	$151.20	$37.22
FY 2023	$5.78	$142.12	$23.97
FY 2024	$5.10	$128.44	$16.32
FRTA FY 2024 Targets	$4.73	$116.86	$18.38
FY 2024 Massachusetts Average [a]	$9.88	$141.70	$7.93
FY 2024 National Rural Average	$6.50	$111.13	$11.13

Source: NTD
[a]Massachusetts average excludes MBTA (from all modes).

Demand Response Financial Performance

Table 16 illustrates the cost effectiveness of FRTA's demand response services from FY 2020 to FY 2024. As was the case for fixed route service, cost effectiveness decreased from FY 2020 to FY 2021. With the implementation of demand taxi service, cost per mile as well as per passenger decreased though cost per hour increased from FY 2021 to FY 2022. FY 2024 costs per mile were higher than the state and national averages, and higher than FRTA's target. Costs per hour in FY 2024 were likewise higher than the state and national rural averages. Cost per passenger was similarly higher than state and national rural averages for FY 2024. Additionally, FRTA did not meet its FY 2024 cost effectiveness targets for cost per passenger or cost per hour.

Table 16. Cost Effectiveness - Demand Response (FY 2020-FY 2024)

Cost Effectiveness Metric	Cost/Mile	Cost/Hour	Cost/Passenger
FY 2020	$6.48	$82.29	$50.04
FY 2021	$10.12	$125.36	$84.54
FY 2022	$9.09	$135.67	$66.49
FY 2023	$7.92	$127.06	$62.16
FY 2024	$8.73	$136.56	$73.08
FRTA FY 2024 Targets	$5.99	$90.57	$36.22
FY 2024 Massachusetts Average [a]	$5.43	$87.07	$44.76
FY 2024 National Rural Average	$3.81	$64.15	$30.16

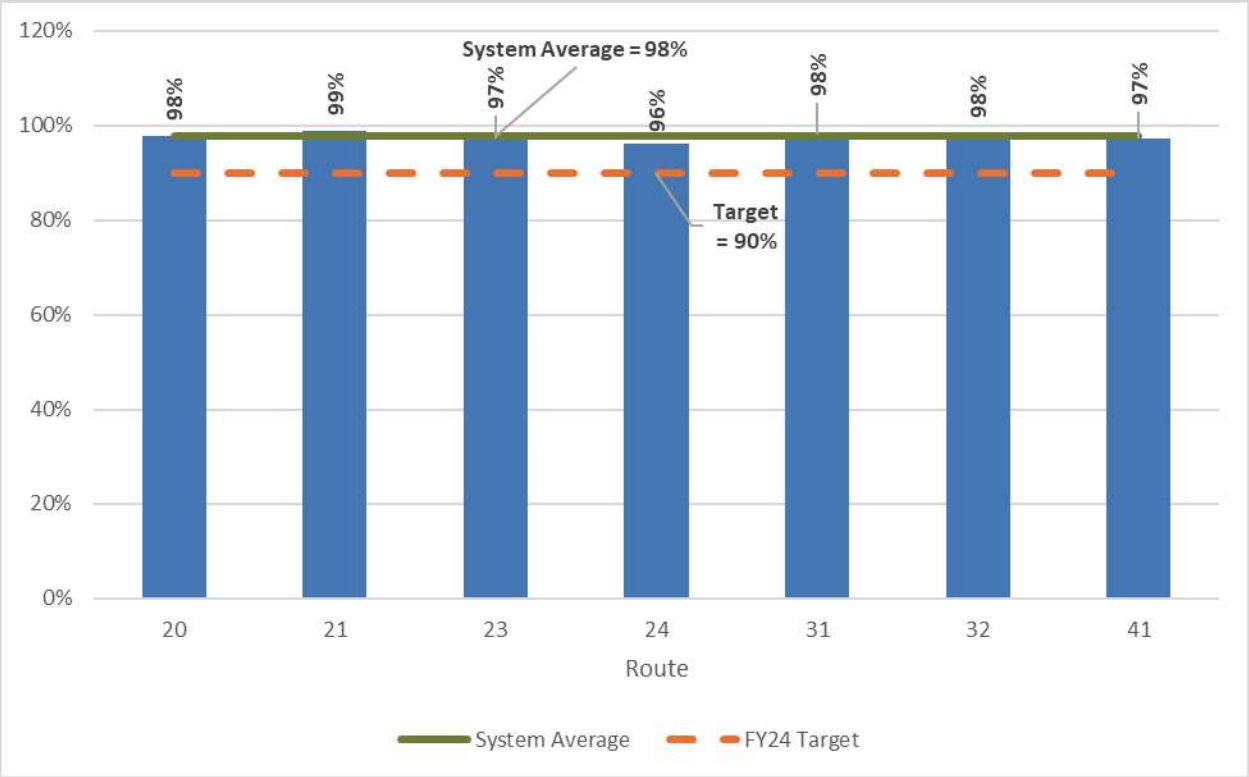
Source: NTD
[a]Massachusetts average excludes MBTA (from all modes).

4.2.5 On-Time Performance

FRTA considers fixed route vehicles on time if they depart at the scheduled departure time or up to 5 minutes after. In FY 2024, FRTA's target for on-time performance was to operate 90

percent of all fixed route trips on time. Fixed route operations far exceeded this goal in FY 2024 as 98 percent of trips were on time (Figure 15). At the route level, all routes met the target of 90 percent on time. Route 21 had the highest on-time performance with 99 percent. Route 24 had the lowest on-time performance with 96 percent.

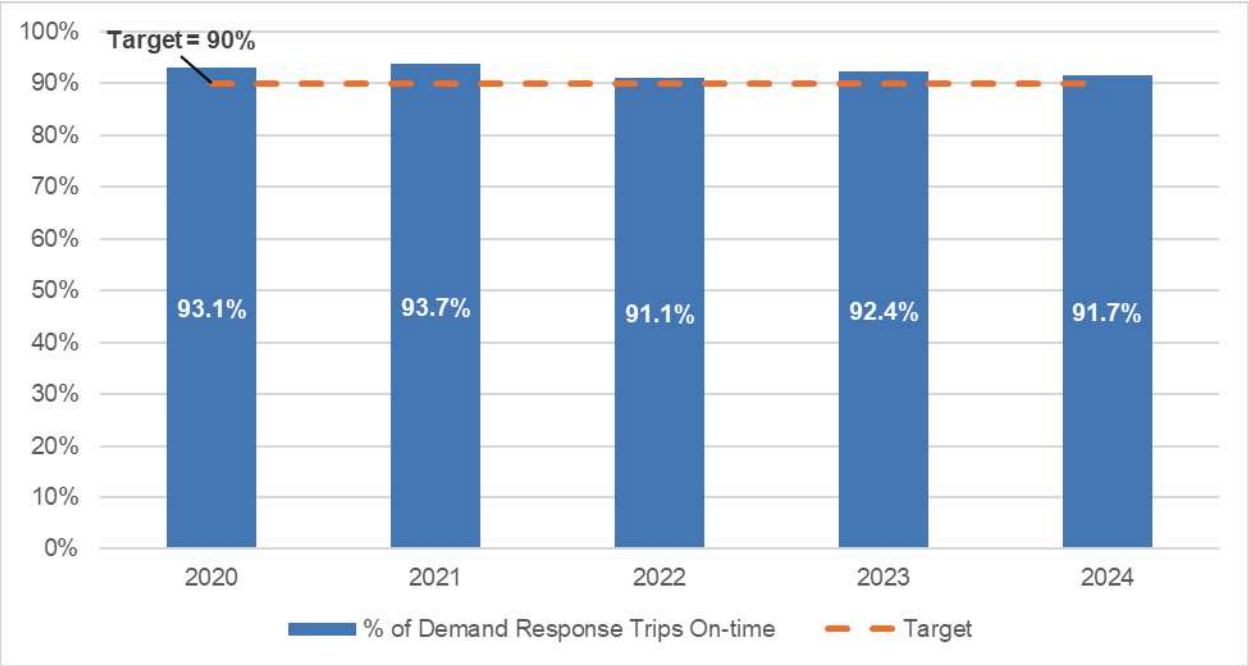
Figure 15. On Time Performance - Fixed Route (FY 2024)



Source: FRTA (2025)

For FRTA's demand response trips, on time is defined as trips that arrive either within 15 minutes early or 15 minutes after the promised pick-up time. The on-time performance target for demand response operations is 90 percent, which was met each year between FY 2020 and FY 2024 (Figure 16).

Figure 16. On-Time Performance - Demand Response (FY 2020-FY 2024)



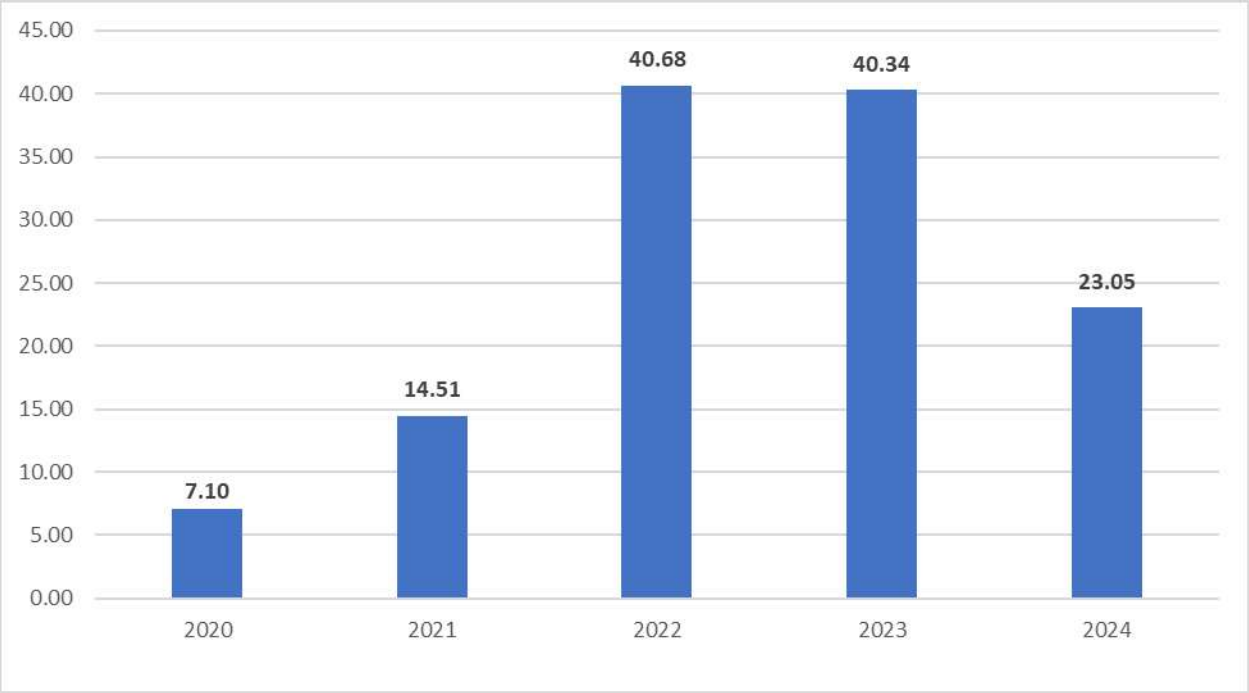
Source: FRTA (2025)

4.2.6 Customer Service

FRTA tracks the number of valid complaints per 100,000 passenger trips to normalize complaints across fluctuating ridership. FRTA groups all valid complaints for all services. Figure 17 shows valid complaints recorded for both fixed route and demand response trips. The lowest number of valid complaints was in FY 2020. There was a peak in the number of valid complaints per 100,000 trips in FY 2022, which was followed by a slight decrease in 2023. Complaints declined further in 2024 by approximately 50 percent.

FRTA began tracking phone hold time in FY 2024, averaging 1 minute of general customer service hold time and 30 seconds of paratransit reservations/dispatch hold time.

Figure 17. Valid Complaints per 100,000 Passenger Trips: All Services (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: FRTA (2025)

4.3 Regional Connections and Partnerships

Regional connections are available for passengers transferring between FRTA, MART, PVTA, and Amtrak services. FRTA Route 32 and the MART Athol Link (G-Link) services connect at the Hannaford Supermarket on the Athol/Orange town line. In Northampton, FRTA Route 31 connects with PVTA Routes 39, 39E, B43, B48, R41, R42, and R44. In Deerfield, FRTA Route 31 and PVTA Route 46 connect, and in Sunderland, FRTA Route 23 and PVTA Route 31 connect at Sugarloaf Estates. FRTA is collaborating with PVTA and BRTA to launch a new intercity commuter service, the Link 413 express bus anticipated to begin service in 2026.

Greyhound operates two to four buses daily—one southbound and one northbound trip Monday through Thursday, and two southbound and two northbound trips Friday through Sunday. The southbound trips go to New York City and northbound trips go to White River Junction, Vermont, via Keene, New Hampshire. While FRTA is unable to sell passengers Greyhound bus tickets at the JWO Transit Center, they can purchase them online or by phone.

The Amtrak Valley Flyer passenger rail service connects Greenfield, Holyoke, Northampton, and Springfield in Massachusetts with CT*rail* (Hartford Line) stations in Connecticut. However, FRTA is unable to sell Amtrak tickets at the JWO Transit Center. Passengers must purchase Amtrak tickets via phone or the Amtrak website. Additionally, the JWO Transit Center is closed on weekends even though Amtrak operates on Saturdays and Sundays. The route operates seven days a week with two daily trains each in the southbound and northbound directions. In addition, the Amtrak Vermonter serves the same Massachusetts stations as the Valley Flyer route with one daily train in each direction. The Valley Flyer does not continue past New Haven but connects with other Amtrak routes serving New York Penn Station.

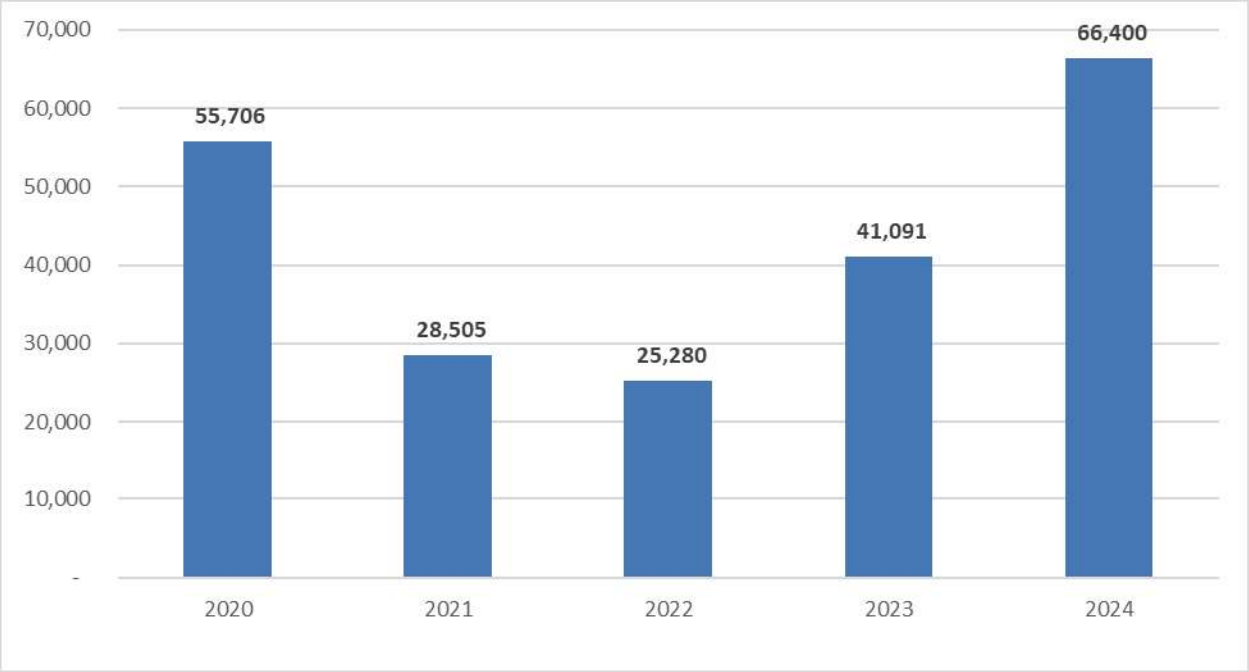
4.4 Asset Management

FRTA assets include vehicles, facilities, and technology. This section provides information regarding FRTA's maintenance and management of these assets.

4.4.1 Maintenance

Miles traveled between road calls dipped from FY 2020 to FY 2021 by approximately 49 percent (Figure 18). Since FY 2021, miles traveled between road calls decreased again in FY 2022 before increasing again in FY 2023 and FY 2024. FRTA recorded a peak high of miles between road calls in FY 2024 of about 66,400 miles.

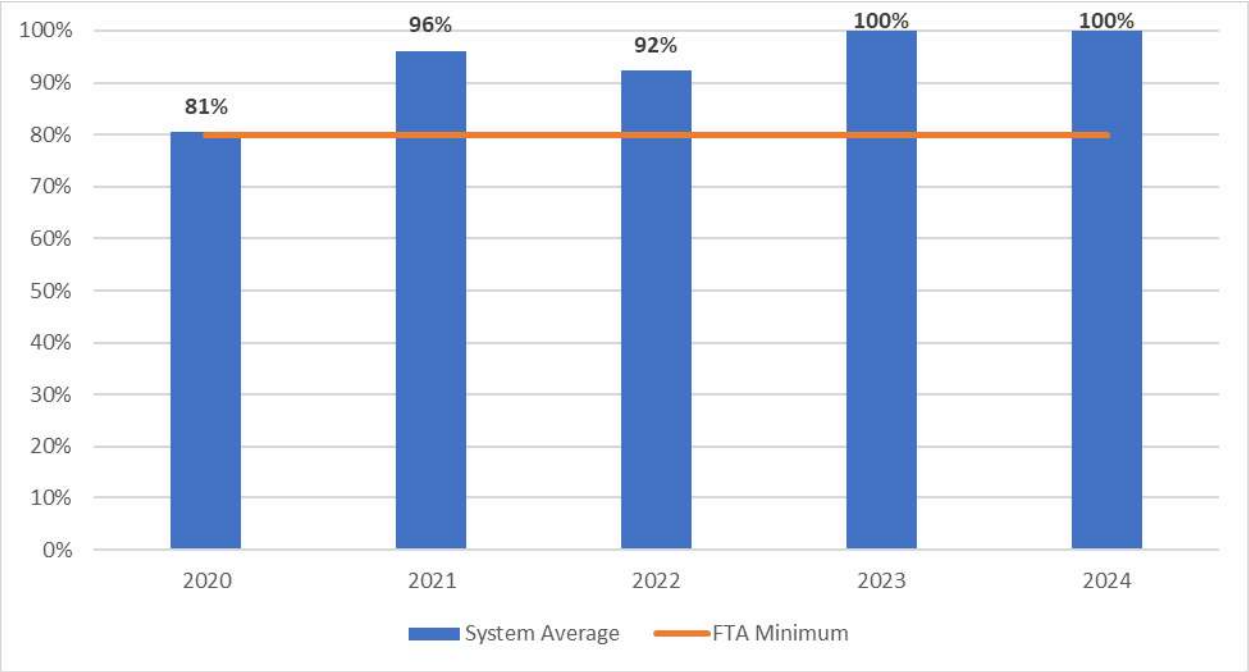
Figure 18. Miles Between Road Calls (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: FRTA (2025)

In the FY 2020 to FY 2024 period, FRTA continued to exceed the FTA minimum of 80 percent for preventable maintenance completed on time (Figure 19). Preventive maintenance was at a period low of 81 percent completed on time in FY 2020 and a period high of 100 percent in FY 2023 and FY 2024.

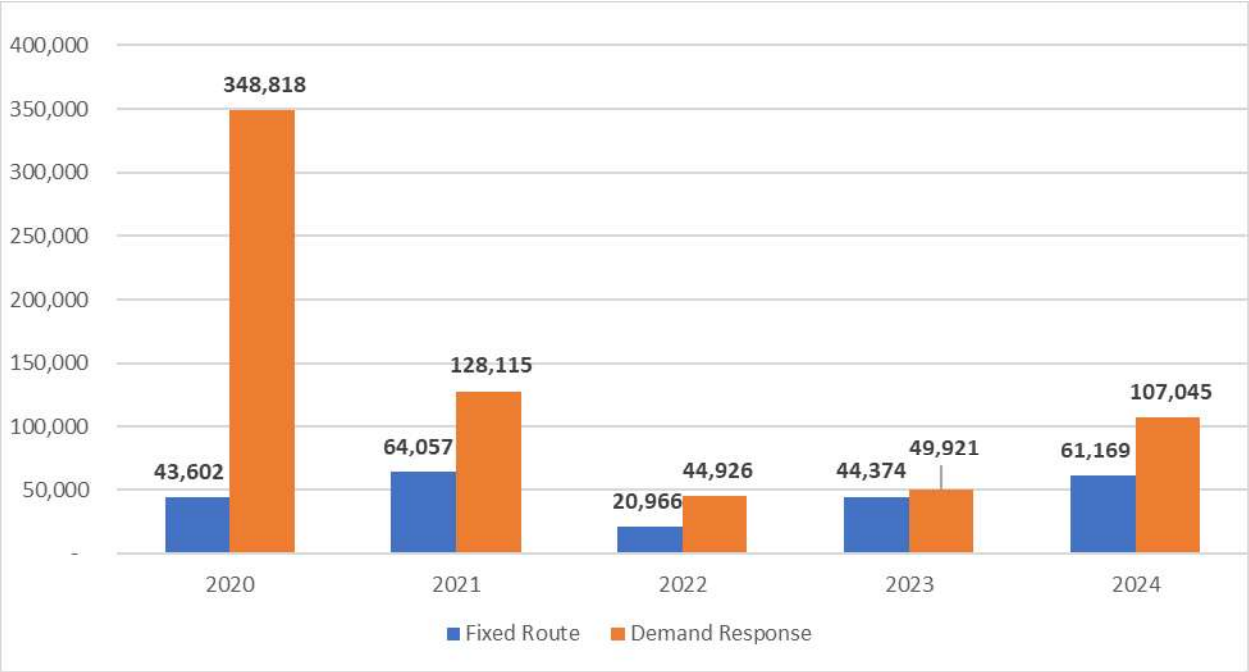
Figure 19. Preventive Maintenance On Time (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: FRTA (2025)

FRTA experienced fluctuation in the number of major mechanical failures over the five-year period (Figure 20). The mean miles traveled between major mechanical failures on demand response vehicles dropped sharply from FY 2020 to FY 2021 by approximately 63 percent. Mean miles between failures dropped further by approximately 65 percent from FY 2021 to FY 2022 to reach the period low for demand response. The mean number of miles between major mechanical failures then increased from FY 2022 to FY 2023 and then again from FY 2023 to FY 2024. Major mechanical failures on fixed route vehicles occurred at a period high frequency in FY 2022, with an incident occurring on average every 21,000 miles. FY 2021 had the highest mean miles between failures with approximately 64,000 miles.

Figure 20. Mean Miles Between Major Mechanical Failures (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: FRTA (2025)

4.4.2 Vehicles

FRTA operates a total of 36 revenue vehicles, with vans and buses making up a significant portion of the rolling stock (Table 17). FRTA also maintains eight non-revenue service vehicles.

Table 17. Equipment Inventory Summary (FY 2024)

Vehicle Type	Total Number	Average Age	Average Mileage	Percentage at or past ULB
Bus	9	5.3	141,762	0%
Cutaway	4	3.3	50,880	0%
Minibus	3	6.0	135,450	0%
Minivan	3	2.0	2,491	0%
Van	17	6.8	71,845	16%

Source: MassDOT (2025)

FRTA participates in the statewide MassDOT Group Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan (MassDOT 2023a). Thus, equipment targets, including useful life benchmark (ULB) data, are inclusive of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe who also participates in the group plan.

4.4.3 Facilities

FRTA owns one public-facing transit hub with an administrative office in Greenfield and one general purpose maintenance facility located in Turners Falls (Table 18). The FRTA Garage, opened in 2023, has a Transit Economic Requirements Model (TERM) rating of 4.9, on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating the facility is in excellent condition. This facility was constructed to replace

the former garage, which had a TERM rating of 2. The JWO Transit Center, opened in 2012, is rated at 4.3 on the TERM scale, indicating the building is also in excellent condition.

Table 18. Facility Inventory Summary

Facility Name	Type	Location	Landowner the Facility is on	Direct Capital Responsibility	TERM Rating
JWO Transit Center	Administration office / Sales office	12 Olive Street, Greenfield, MA	FRTA	Yes	4.3
FRTA Garage	General purpose maintenance facility/depot	3 Sandy Lane, Turners Falls, MA	FRTA	Yes	4.9

Source: MassDOT (2025)

4.4.4 Technology

FRTA continues to utilize and invest in various technologies to assist with the provision of both fixed route and demand response service. Between 2020 and 2024, FRTA acquired a new Push-To-Talk-Over-Cellular (PTToC) radio system, acquired new fixed route scheduling and real-time passenger information software (including automatic passenger counters [APCs] and arrival/departure screens at the JWO Transit Center), expanded its demand response scheduling software by adding two of its demand response COA partners (Southwick/Hulmes and Hilltown Community Development Corporation) into the system, and acquired a new in-house transit bus simulator to expand its driver training program. Looking forward to the next five years, FRTA is planning to add additional demand response COA partners into the scheduling software system, rollout fleet maintenance software, acquire fixed route run-cutting software, and determine whether there will be a need in the future for a new electronic fare collection system.

4.5 Policies and Procedures

Like other agencies, FRTA has a number of procedures, some of which are formal policies. FRTA has posted rider guides for fixed route as well as demand response service. FRTA has a customary procedure for the contracting of services with private operators, policies for non-ADA demand response eligibility, as well as using volunteer drivers for a portion of demand response service. FRTA also has a social media policy. Finally, FRTA has targets for fatalities, injuries, and miles between major mechanical failures.

4.5.1 Rider Guides

On its website, FRTA has a rider guide available for its fixed route system that provides basic contact information as well as instructions on how to ride the bus, how to bring a bicycle on the bus, expected passenger etiquette, and how to file a complaint or notify FRTA about a concern.

FRTA also provides rider guides for demand response services. These are tailored to specific geographies within FRTA's service area. They include service rules, eligibility, and instructions on how to use the service.

4.5.2 Contracting of Services

Per statute, FRTA as an RTA, is required to contract with private operators to operate transit services. FRTA contracted with TransDev for all seven of its fixed routes, ADA complementary paratransit service, three of its non-ADA demand response service areas, and microtransit service, FRTA Access. Franklin Transit Management, Inc. (FTM) is protected under public transit employee protections in Section 13(c) of the Federal Transit Act, which gives it the right to operate the service in the area as they were the private operator prior to the creation of FRTA in 1978. FRTA is responsible for contracting out management for FTM.

FRTA also contracts with six COAs, one CDC, and a local transportation operator (Hulmes) to serve the remaining eight non-ADA demand response service areas. Each of these contracts is renewed every year.[1] This renewal protocol allows FRTA to clarify contractual requirements and update as needed. Conversely, the number of contracts and regularity of negotiation requires significant staff time. FRTA has limited documented policies and procedures for administrative tasks, such as contract management.

4.5.3 Social Media

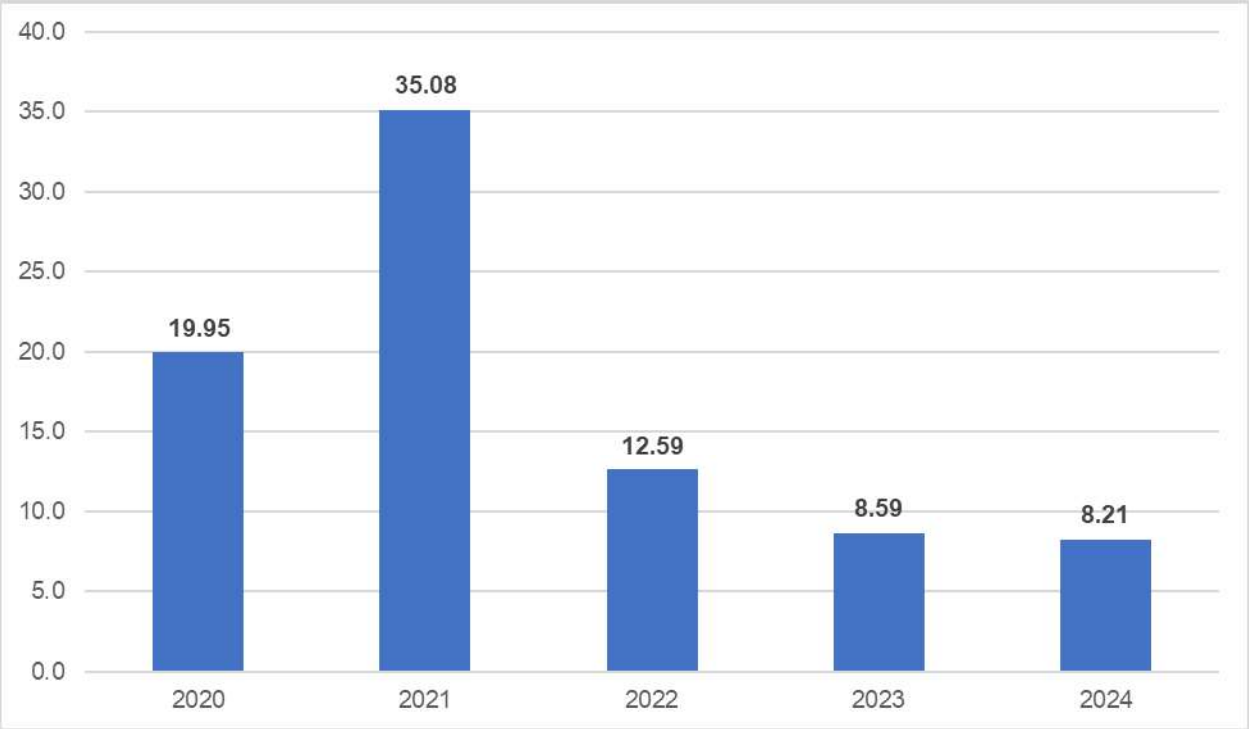
The FRTA also has a social media policy wherein the agency reserves the right to delete any post that does not conform to these guidelines (FRTA 2025). In general, hateful or inflammatory messages, advertisements, or spam are not allowed.

4.5.4 Safety and Security

Preventable accidents per 100,000 miles were at a period high in FY 2021 with over 3.5 per 100,000, inclusive of all modes (Figure 21). From the high in FY 2021, the rate of preventable accidents decreased in FY 2022 and each year since to reach a period low in FY 2024 of less than one.

[1] FRTA is not required to go through a competitive procurement for these operators because of the contract value.

Figure 21. Preventable Accidents per One Million Revenue Miles, Fixed Route and Demand Response (FY 2020-FY 2024)

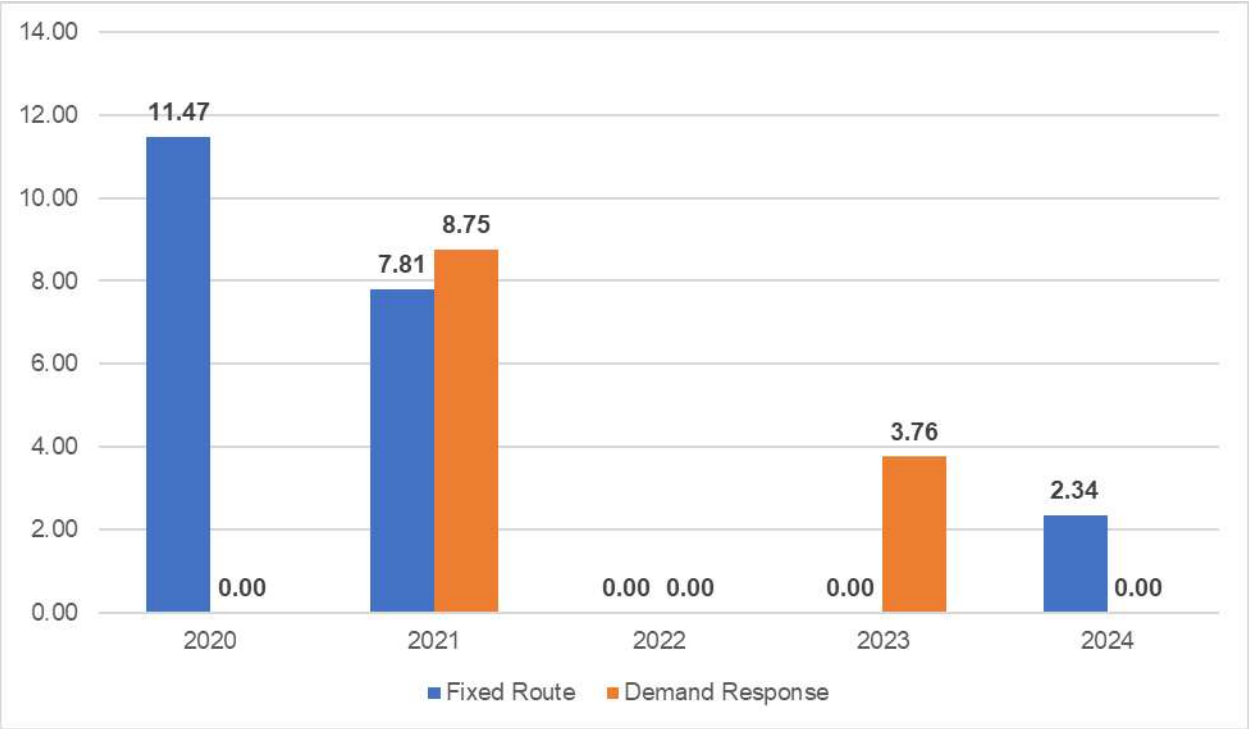


Source: FRTA (2025)

FRTA does not set targets specifically for fatalities or injuries. As a rural transit agency, FRTA is not required to complete a Public Transit Safety Action Plan (PTASP) and thus does not have a current plan. In the last five years, FRTA has recorded zero fatalities across all modes. FRTA also did not record any injuries on demand response service between FY 2020 and FY 2024. The highest number of injuries occurring on fixed route service was recorded in FY 2020 with 10 injuries. FRTA did not record any injuries in FY 2022 and FY 2023. There were two injuries on fixed route service in FY 2021 and one in FY 2024.

A major safety event is categorized based on parameters outlined in the FTA Safety and Security Reporting Policy Manual. Figure 22 displays the total number of safety events by mode for FY 2020 through FY 2024. For all years, the rate of safety events was below 0.001 events per 100,000 miles. As with injuries, the highest recorded number of safety events was in FY 2020 with four events for fixed route. Demand response safety events occurred in FY 2021 and FY 2024 with one each year. No safety events were recorded in FY 2022 for either mode.

Figure 22. Safety Events per One Million Revenue Miles (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: FRTA (2025)

4.6 Peer Agency Analysis

As part of the CRTP update, a peer review was conducted to gain an understanding of how other similar systems are operating transit service. This peer review explores five transit agencies that operate in similar conditions. Although each transit system and route is unique, the similarities and differences exhibited by these five peers provide useful insight into how transit service is provided and operated throughout the country.

Peers were chosen using iNTD, which assigns transit agencies across the country and their service areas with likeness scores for demographic and service metrics summarized in Table 19 and Table 20, respectively. After excluding outliers (transit agencies with two or more characteristics that widely differed from FRTA), iNTD's overall likeness score was used to rank peers and select the top five (FDOT 2025).

Compared to the average of all peers, FRTA serves a greater total population within its service area, though population density is on par with peers. FRTA has a lower 10-year population growth compared to peers and the percentage of population in poverty is also aligned with the peer average.

Table 19. Peer Systems Census Data

System	Town	State	Population	Population Density	Population Growth Rate	Percent Poverty
Tri-Valley Transit Inc	Middlebury	VT	37,497	49	2%	7%
Tehama County	Gerber	CA	65,520	22	4%	14%

Essex County	Elizabethtown	NY	37,077	21	-5%	12%
Tillamook County Transportation District	Tillamook	OR	27,471	25	9%	12%
Fairmont Marion County Transit Authority	Fairmont	WV	56,042	181	-1%	14%
Peer Average	N/A	N/A	44,721	60	2%	12%
Franklin Regional Transit Authority	**Greenfield**	**MA**	**70,922**	**59**	**-1%**	**12%**

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
N/A = Not Applicable

In comparison to peers, FRTA has a higher percentage of demand response service miles and a higher operating budget. FRTA's revenue miles and revenue hours operated are lower than the peer average, as did farebox revenue.

Table 20. Peer Systems Operating Data

System	Ridership (UPT)	Percentage of Service Miles Demand Response	Operating Budget	Revenue Miles Operated	Revenue Hours Operated	Farebox Revenue
Tri-Valley Transit Inc	173,945	62%	$6,531,046	2,205,256	83,790	$1,460,177
Tehama County	119,863	26%	$2,101,521	630,383	27,464	$0
Essex County	94,608	0%	$1,033,596	324,775	15,309	$15,907
Tillamook County Transportatio n District	121,604	24%	$3,662,518	987,747	38,121	$662,081
Fairmont Marion County Transit Authority	142,444	48%	$2,790,971	615,712	36,287	$476,323
Peer Average	130,493	32%	3,223,930	952,775	40,194	522,898
Franklin Regional Transit Authority	**134,445**	**43%**	**$4,679,001**	**698,539**	**34,905**	**$131,103**

Source: NTD (2023)

A comparison of key service metrics, such as passengers per mile and cost per hour, is presented in Table 21. Generally, FRTA service is on par with peer averages for passengers per mile (0.18 per mile) and per hour (3.95 per hour). For cost per hour, FRTA spends significantly more compared to peers. The average cost per hour for selected peers was $78.99, while FRTA spends $134.05 per hour (nearly 70 percent more). FRTA also spends more per passenger than four out of five peers. Only Tri-Valley Transit in Vermont had a higher rate, though Tillamook County Transportation District was relatively close (approximately $4 less per passenger). Regarding farebox recovery, FRTA had a significantly lower recovery rate compared to the peer average.

Table 21. Peer System Performance

System	Passengers per Mile	Passengers per Hour	Cost per Hour	Cost per Passenger	Subsidy per Passenger	Farebox Recovery
Tri-Valley Transit Inc	0.08	2.08	$77.95	$37.55	$37.55	22.4%
Tehama County	0.19	4.36	$76.52	$17.53	$17.53	0.0%
Essex County	0.29	6.18	$67.52	$10.93	$10.93	1.5%
Tillamook County Transportation District	0.12	3.19	$96.08	$30.12	$30.12	18.1%
Fairmont Marion County Transit Authority	0.23	3.93	$76.91	$19.59	$19.59	17.1%
Peer Average	0.18	3.95	$78.99	$23.14	$19.67	11.8%
Franklin Regional Transit Authority	**0.19**	**3.85**	**$134.05**	**$34.80**	**$33.83**	**0.7%**

Source: NTD (2023)

5 Market Evaluation

This chapter includes an overview of the existing demographic and socioeconomic characteristics for the FRTA service area. A market assessment can identify areas for existing and future connectivity based on population, job, and transit demand factors. This market assessment utilizes the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates (US Census Bureau 2023), the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) 2022 data set (US Census Bureau 2025b), and Replica travel data.

5.1 Demographic Analysis

Certain populations have a higher propensity to ride transit. This demographic analysis considers several key population indicators of transit use and demand to guide FRTA's transit service planning. These are:

- Population Density: Population density is the key determinant of transit use, with transit offering a more efficient way to move many people in a constrained area than personal vehicles. Knowing the population density of the different parts of their service area can help transit agencies identify and plan for the most suitable types of transit to offer across multiple locations.
- Older Adult Population: Older adults are those residents 65 years of age or older. As people age, their ability to safely operate a personal vehicle often becomes limited, making transit or other shared transportation a vital part of maintaining mobility and accessing shops, medical resources, and entertainment.
- Youth Population: Youth are considered to be under the age of 18 years old. Many children and teenagers rely on transit to reach school, activities, sports, etc., often at times when their caregivers or school-sponsored transportation is unavailable.
- Median Household Income and Low Income Population: Income level is commonly a traditional driver of transit demand, with low income individuals and households tending to rely more on transit. For this analysis, low income households are defined as households earning 100 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL). FPL varies by the number of people in the household; in 2023, the FPL was $14,580 for a household of one person and $30,000 for a household of four.
- Zero-Vehicle Households: Zero-vehicle households are those with no access to a private vehicle. They are likely to rely on transit service as a reliable source of transprotation to meet their mobility needs.
- Populations other than Non-Hispanic White: Demographic groups other than non-Hispanic white populations are tranditionally likely to rely on transit.
- Population with Disabilities: Those with a physical or mental disability are less likely to be able to operate a personal vehicle and often rely on transit use, especially paratransit services.
- Title VI Indicators: Title VI indicators combine low income and population other than non-Hispanic white (as previously described) to guide Title VI planning efforts.
- Job Density: The density of jobs , like population density, indicates a concentration of trip generators that may be well-served by transit, especially at shift changes that may result in many people commuting to or from work at the same time.

Together, these demographic indicators of the populations that have a high propensity to take transit enable FRTA to better contextualize existing service and best meet the unmet needs of

different segments of the community. Sections 5.1.1 through 5.1.10 illustrate the distribution of each demographic indicator throughout FRTA's service area.

Note: The demographic analysis is performed at the Census Block Group level. A Census Block Group is made up of a cluster of Census Blocks (the smallest geographic unit) within a Census Tract. It typically contains between 600-3,000 people. The towns of Rowe and Monroe are combined into a single block group by the U.S. Census Bureau. As Monroe is not an FRTA member community, the town is included in the FRTA service area on the maps; however, the combined block group still contains Monroe's demographic data.

5.1.1 Population Density

The population density, or population per square mile, in the FRTA service area is shown in Figure 23. Most of FRTA's service area is categorized by low population density, with an average population density of 101 people per square mile. Central Greenfield has the highest population density in the block groups directly north of the JWO Transit Center. These high density areas are served by the existing fixed route network as nearly all of FRTA's fixed routes start and end at the JWO Transit Center.

5.1.2 Older Adult Population

Older adults, defined as people equal to or greater than 65 years of age, are likely to be transit dependent and/or prefer utilizing transit to maintain their independence to access medical appointments, grocery stores, recreational opportunities, and more. Figure 24 displays the percentage of older adults throughout the FRTA service area. Areas with the highest percentages of older adults include Shelburne, Hawley, eastern Ashfield, northern Buckland, and eastern Greenfield. The block group with the high proportion of older adults in Greenfield is currently served by Route 23 and Route 24. Block groups with high proportions of older adults in Shelburne and Buckland are served by Route 41. Older adults in Hawley and Ashfield are not currently served by the FRTA fixed route network but are eligible for trips provided by local COAs as part of the FRTA Non-ADA demand response. Greenfield and a portion of Shelburne are also within one of FRTA's microtransit (FRTA Access) zones.

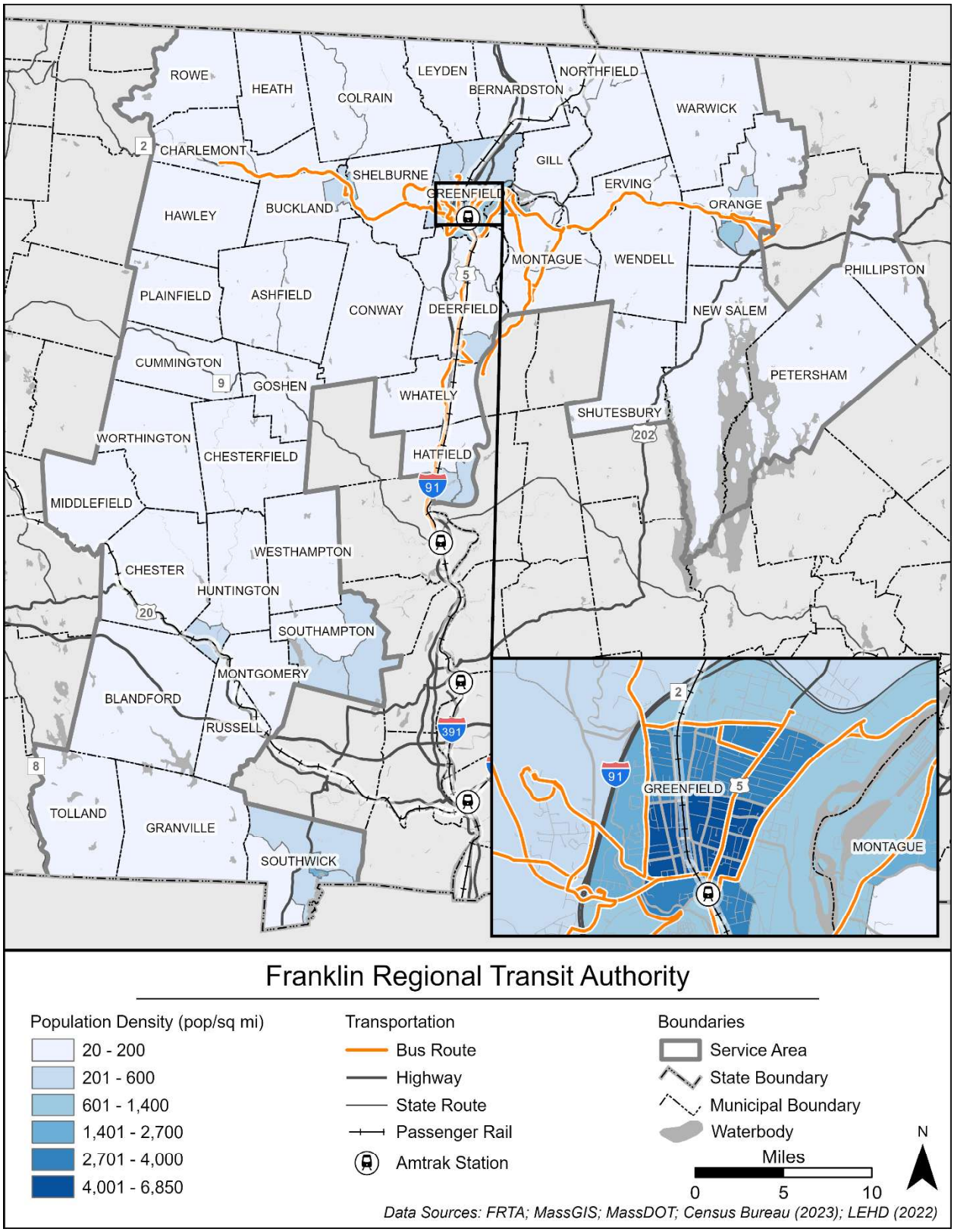
5.1.3 Youth Population

The youth population, defined as the percentage of the population under the age of 18, is shown in Figure 25. Generally, youth are more likely to utilize transit as a reliable and convenient form of transportation, in lieu of car ownership. High proportions of youth populations can be seen in west Greenfield, served by FRTA's two local circulator loops, and southern Orange at the terminus of Route 32. Other areas with high proportions of youths include southern Southampton and southern Huntington. These areas are not currently connected to the FRTA fixed route network.

5.1.4 Median Household Income

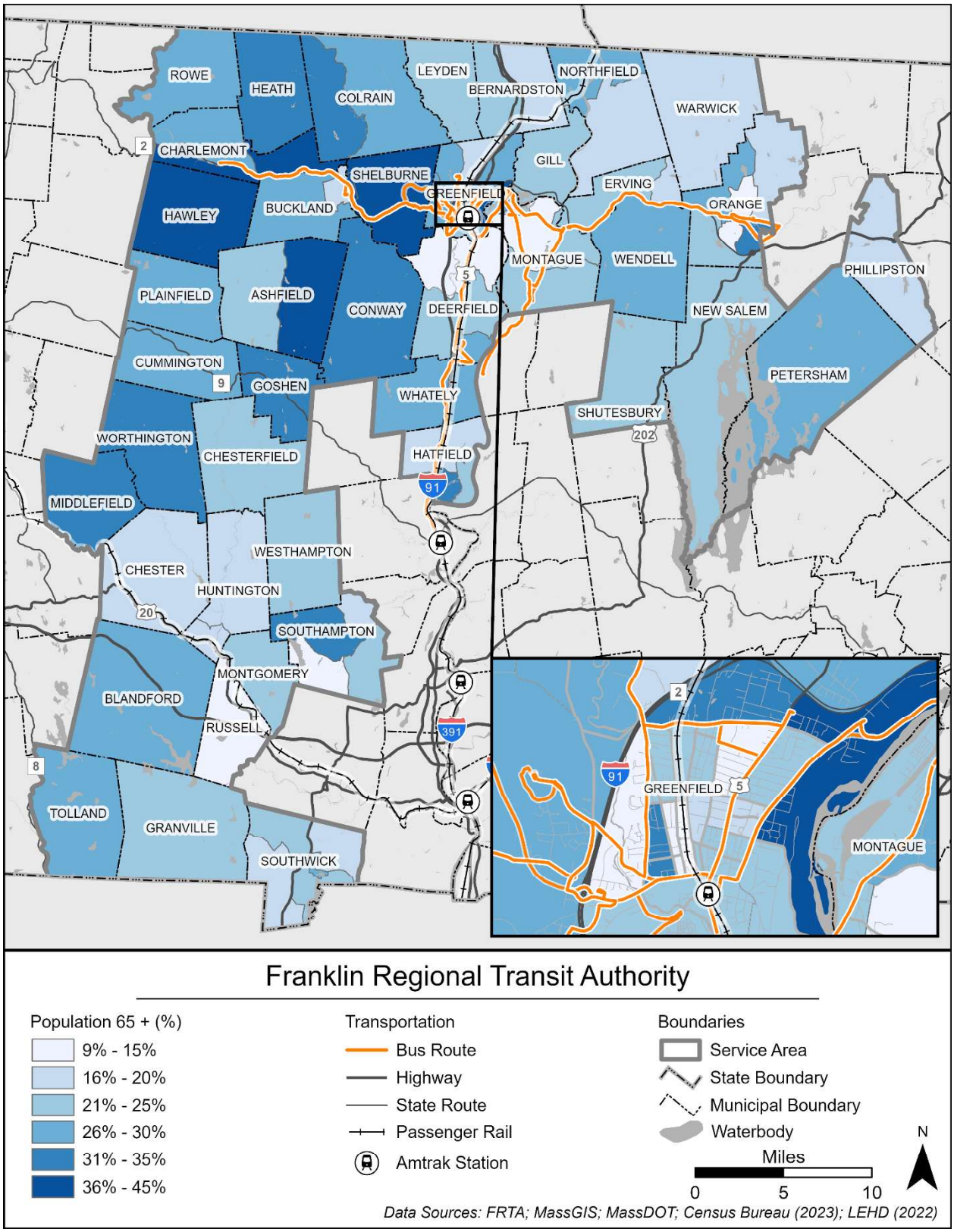
Block groups within the FRTA service area with the lowest median incomes can be found in central Greenfield and southern Orange (Figure 26). As described, all but one of FRTA's fixed routes starts and ends at the JWO Transit Center in central Greenfield. Block groups with the lowest median household incomes in Orange are served by FRTA Route 32. Block groups with high median household incomes are located near the southern border of FRTA's service area such as Southampton, Huntington, Montgomery, and Southwick.

Figure 23. Population Density



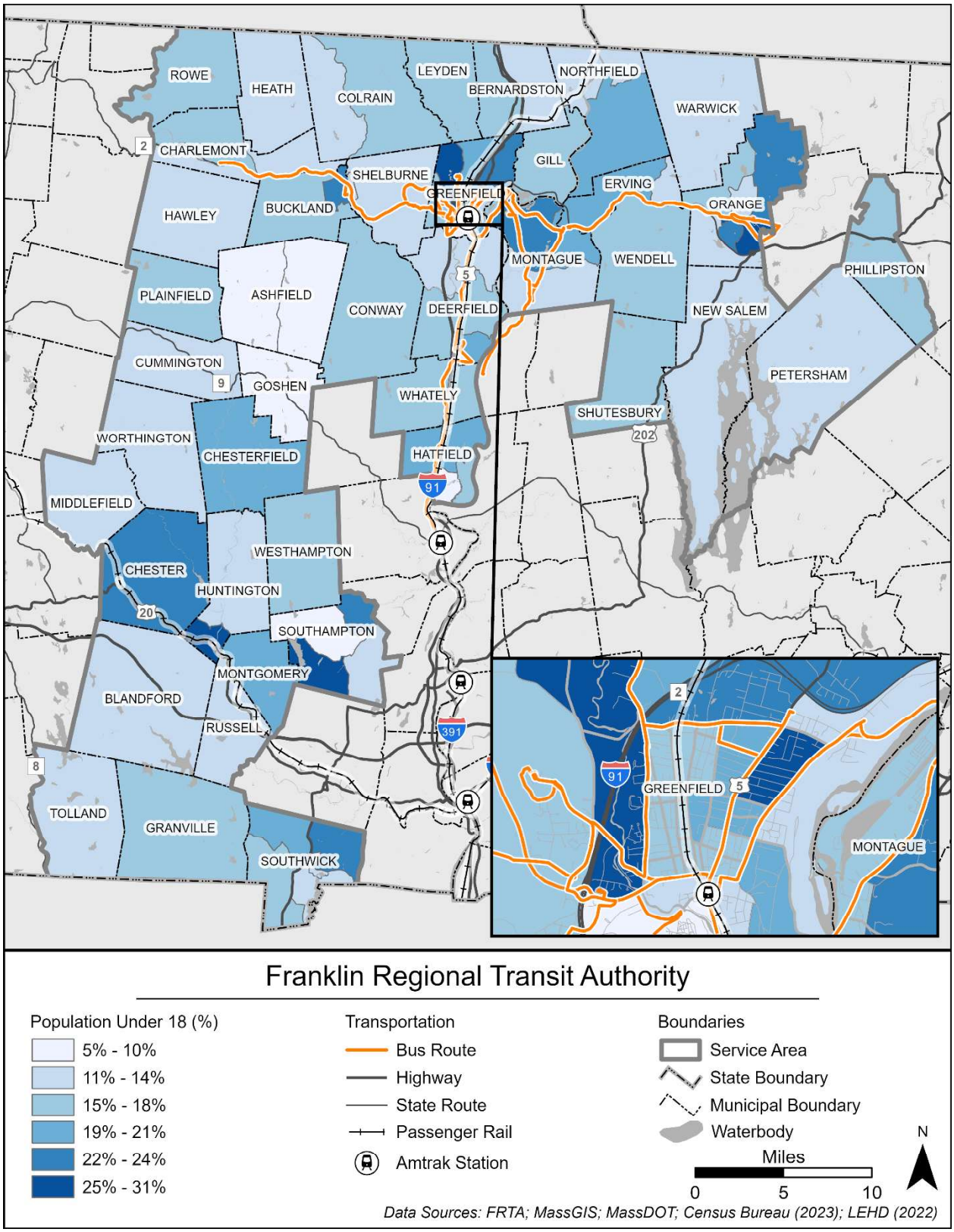
Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 24. Older Adult Population



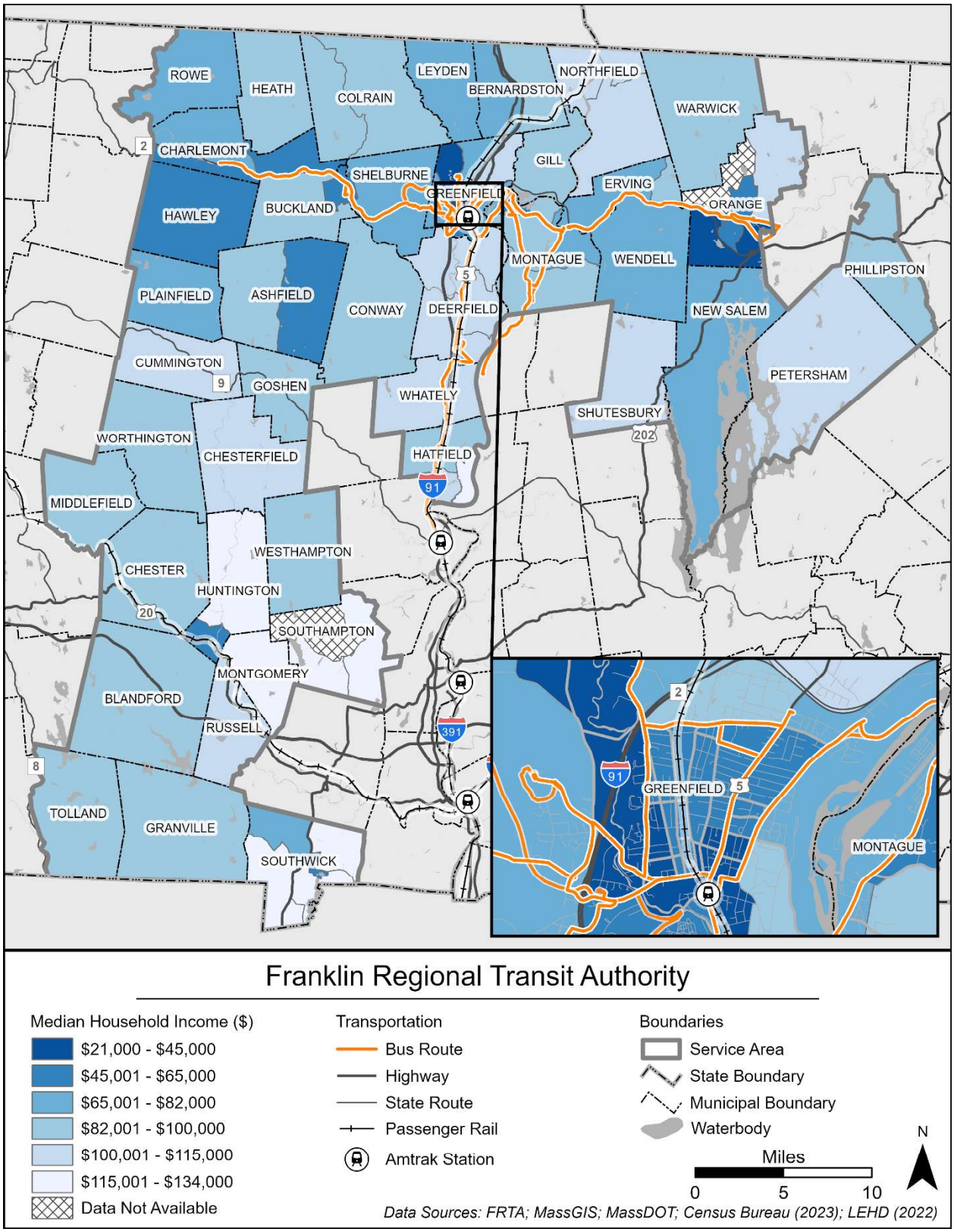
Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 25. Youth Population



Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 26. Median Household Income



Source: AECOM (2025)

5.1.5 Low-Income Population

Figure 27 displays the proportions of the population considered low income. Low income is considered under 100 percent of the FPL. Block groups with high proportions of households meeting this criterion can be seen in central and western Greenfield and in southern Orange. In general, the existing fixed route network serves areas with high proportions of low income households. One notable exception is the block group in southern Huntington, which is not connected to the fixed route system.

5.1.6 Zero-Vehicle Households

The majority of communities within FRTA's service area have low percentages of households that do not have access to a private vehicle (Figure 28). Areas with high proportions of zero-vehicle households can be seen in central and southwest Greenfield as well as in southeastern Orange. These pockets of high proportions of zero-vehicle households are currently served by the existing fixed route network.

5.1.7 Population Other Than Non-Hispanic White

Figure 29 shows the proportion of the population other than non-Hispanic white. In general, communities on the eastern side of the FRTA service area have high proportions of populations of non-white (or Hispanic) residents. Greenfield, Deerfield, and New Salem have the highest proportion of populations other than non-Hispanic white. Other pockets or high proportions of these populations include southern Southampton and southern Orange.

5.1.8 Adult Disabled Population

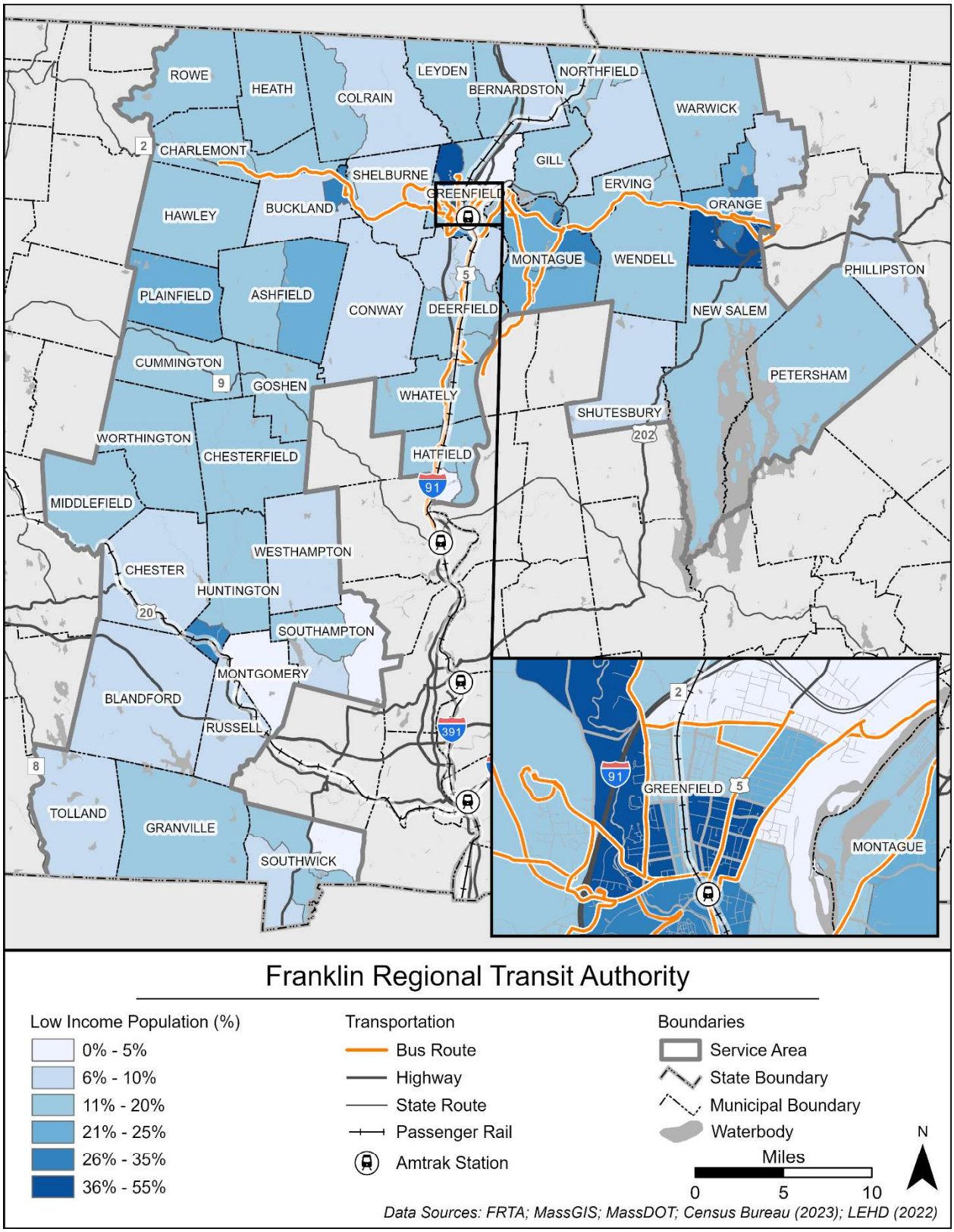
The proportions of adult disabled population are shown in Figure 30. Areas with the highest percentages of adult disabled residents can be seen in western and central Greenfield and in Orange. These residents are served by the FRTA fixed route network, ADA demand response, FRTA Access, and through COA transportation programs.

5.1.9 Title VI Population

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in a federally assisted program. Like other transit authorities, FRTA is required to comply with Title VI requirements as a recipient of federal funds. Title VI indicators include two factors: low income and population other than non-Hispanic white. For Title VI reporting, FRTA defines high minority areas as those block groups where a larger than service area average (10.3 percent) share of the population is part of a minority group. Block groups where the median household income is below $43,484 (60 percent of the median area household income) are considered low income.

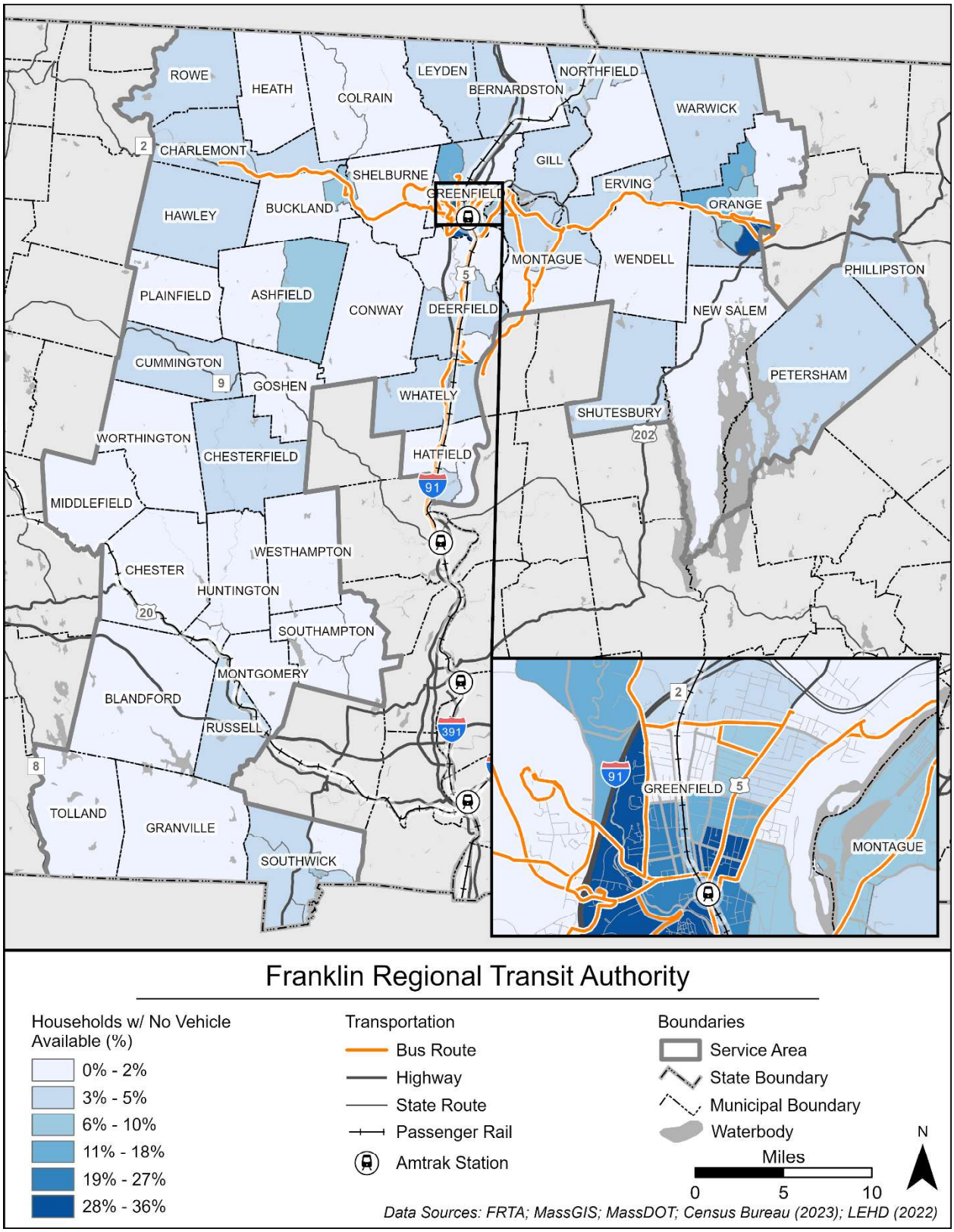
Title VI populations (populations that meet one or both factors identified) are mapped in Figure 31. Areas where proportions of low income or demographic groups other than non-Hispanic white exceed the set thresholds occur in few areas. Central Greenfield near the JWO Transit Center and western Greenfield meet Title VI criteria. Additionally, a block group in southern Orange also meets both criteria.

Figure 27. Low-Income Population



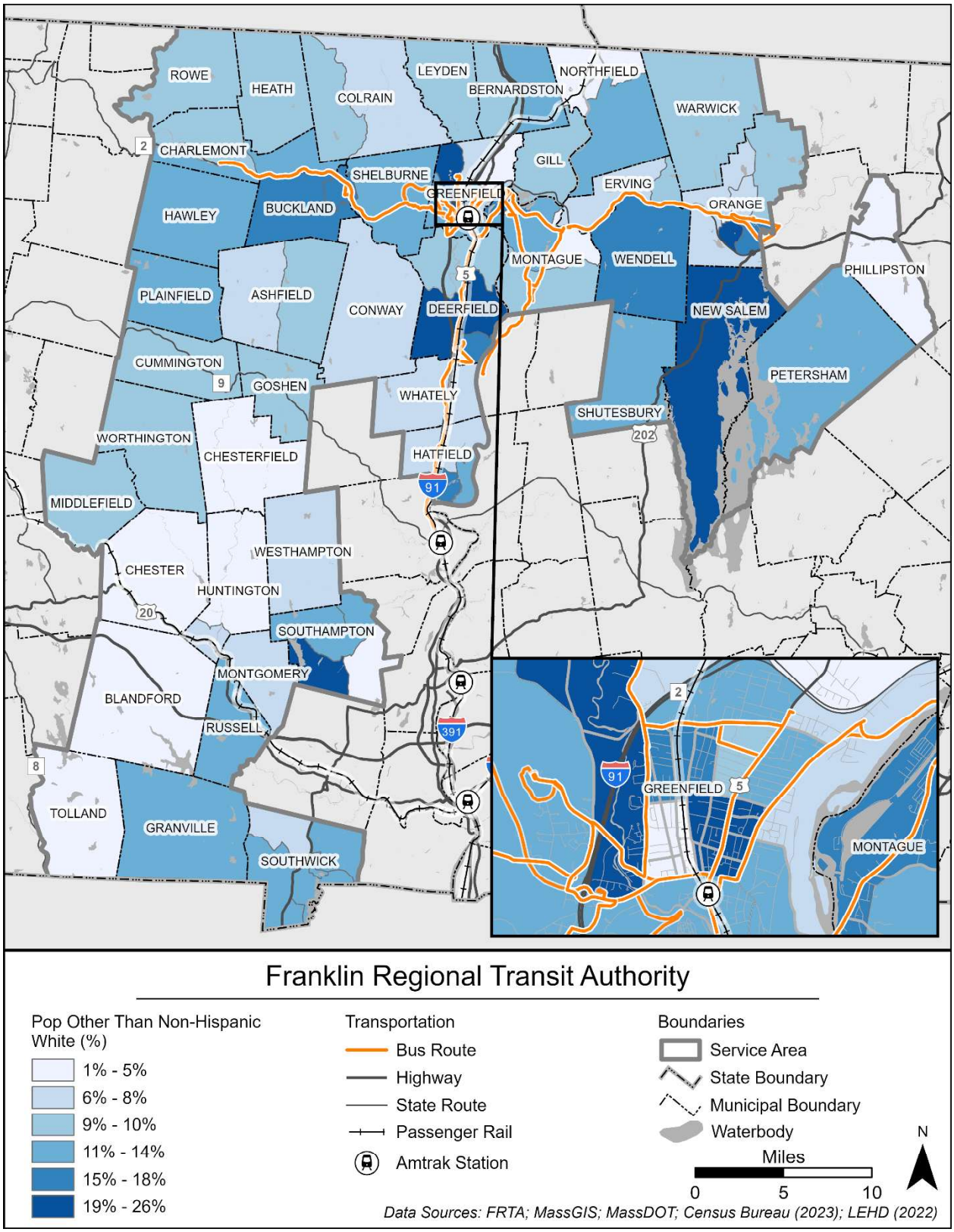
Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 28. Zero-Vehicle Households



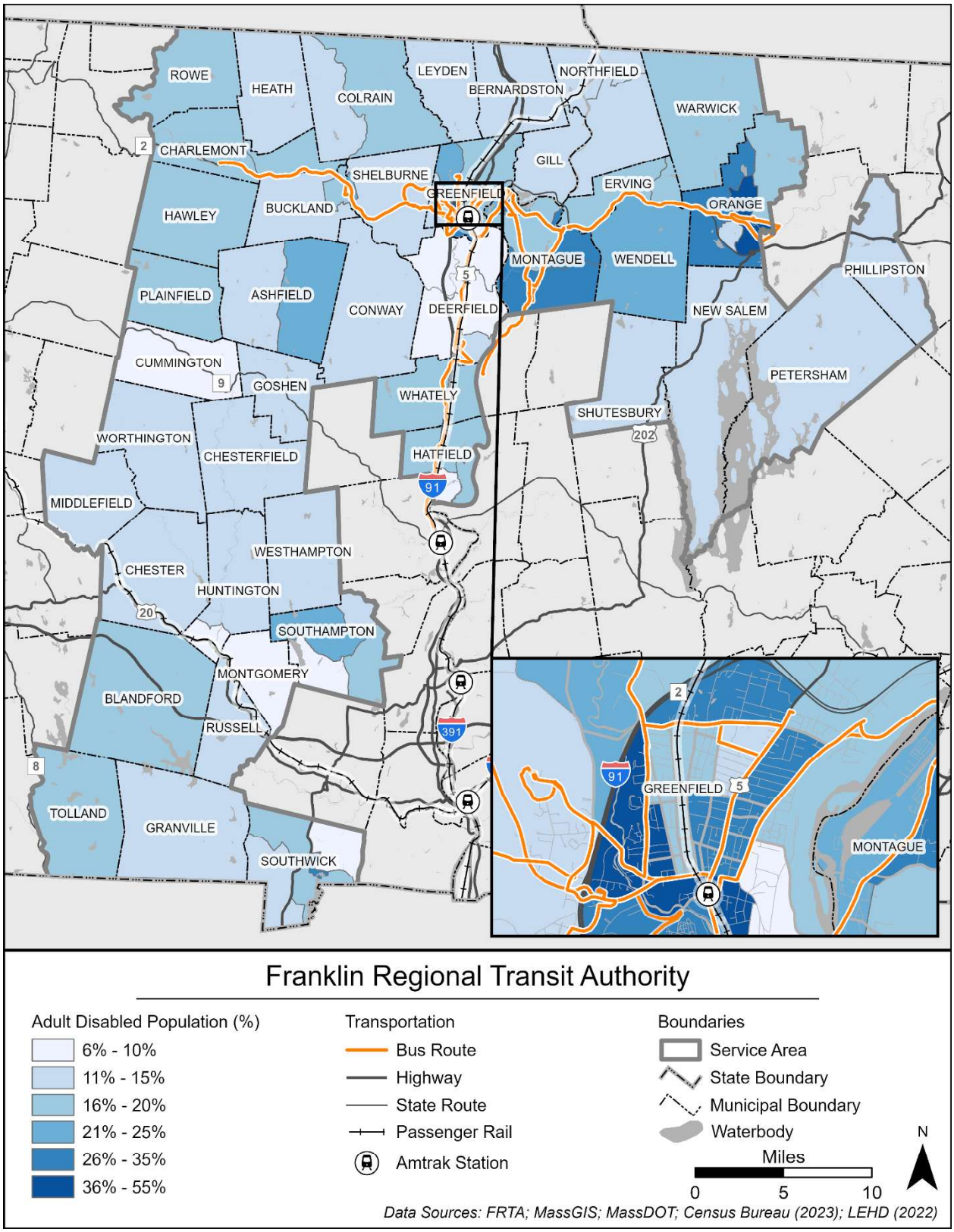
Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 29. Population Other Than Non-Hispanic White



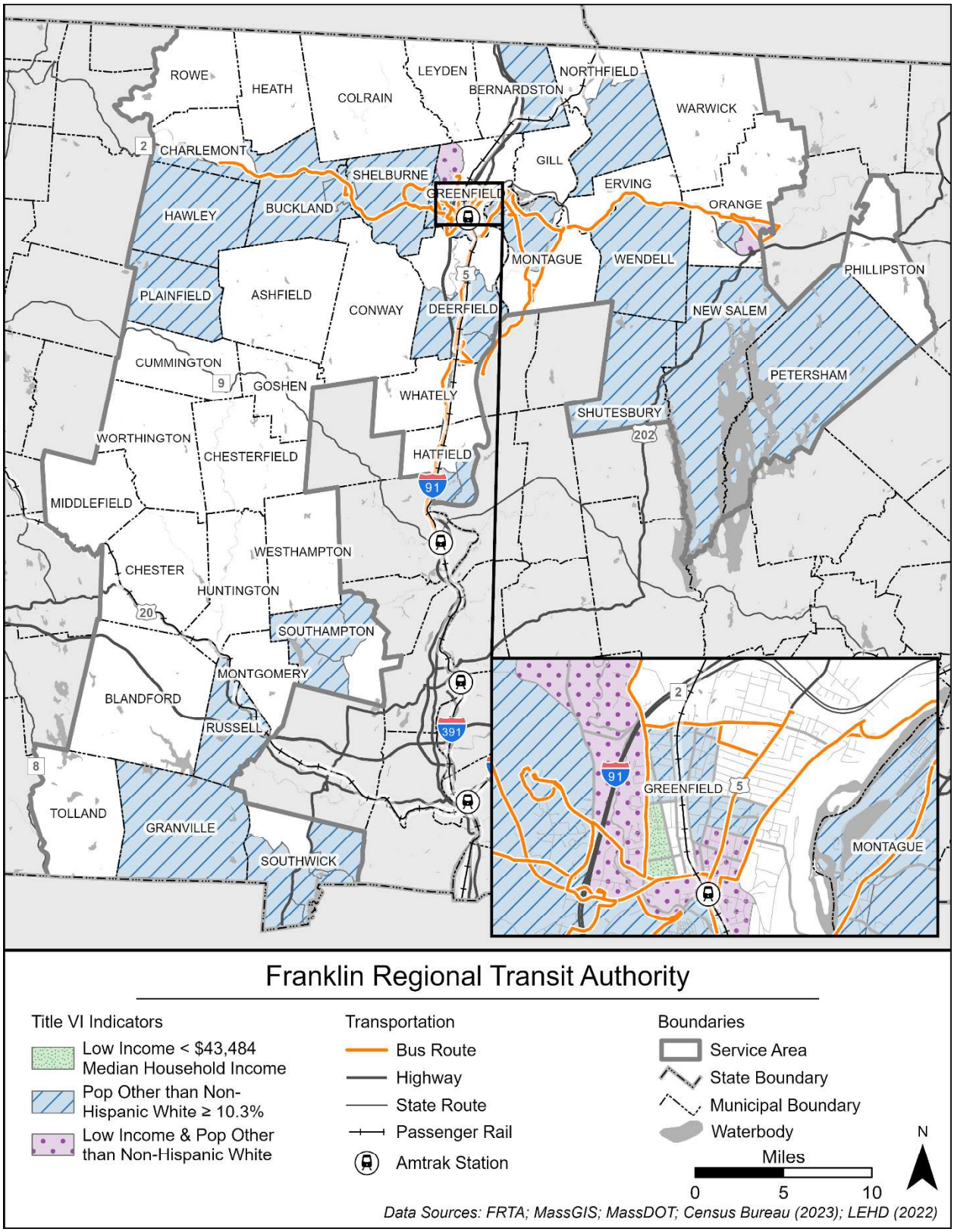
Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 30. Adult Disabled Population



Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 31. Title VI Population



Source: AECOM (2025)

5.1.10 Job Density

The density of jobs is relatively low across the entire FRTA service area, with the exception of central Greenfield (Figure 32). This area surrounding the JWO Transit Center has the largest cluster of jobs in the service area. This cluster is served by FRTA's fixed route network; however, a cluster of jobs on the north side of Route 2 is not connected to the fixed route network but is within the FRTA Access service area. Other moderately large clusters of jobs can be seen along Route 31 in Deerfield and Whately and in Turners Falls. This job cluster in Turners Falls is served by Route 233, Route 24, and Route 32.

5.2 Transit Score

The transit score map provides a spatial analysis of the demographic characteristics of populations that typically indicate a high propensity to rely on transit. This transit score is a relative measure of how successful a fixed route transit system is expected to be in a region where most residents who can own cars and drive choose to do so. Used in conjunction with a congruency analysis of major transit generators, the transit score can be used to evaluate existing service and to identify areas of potential demand.

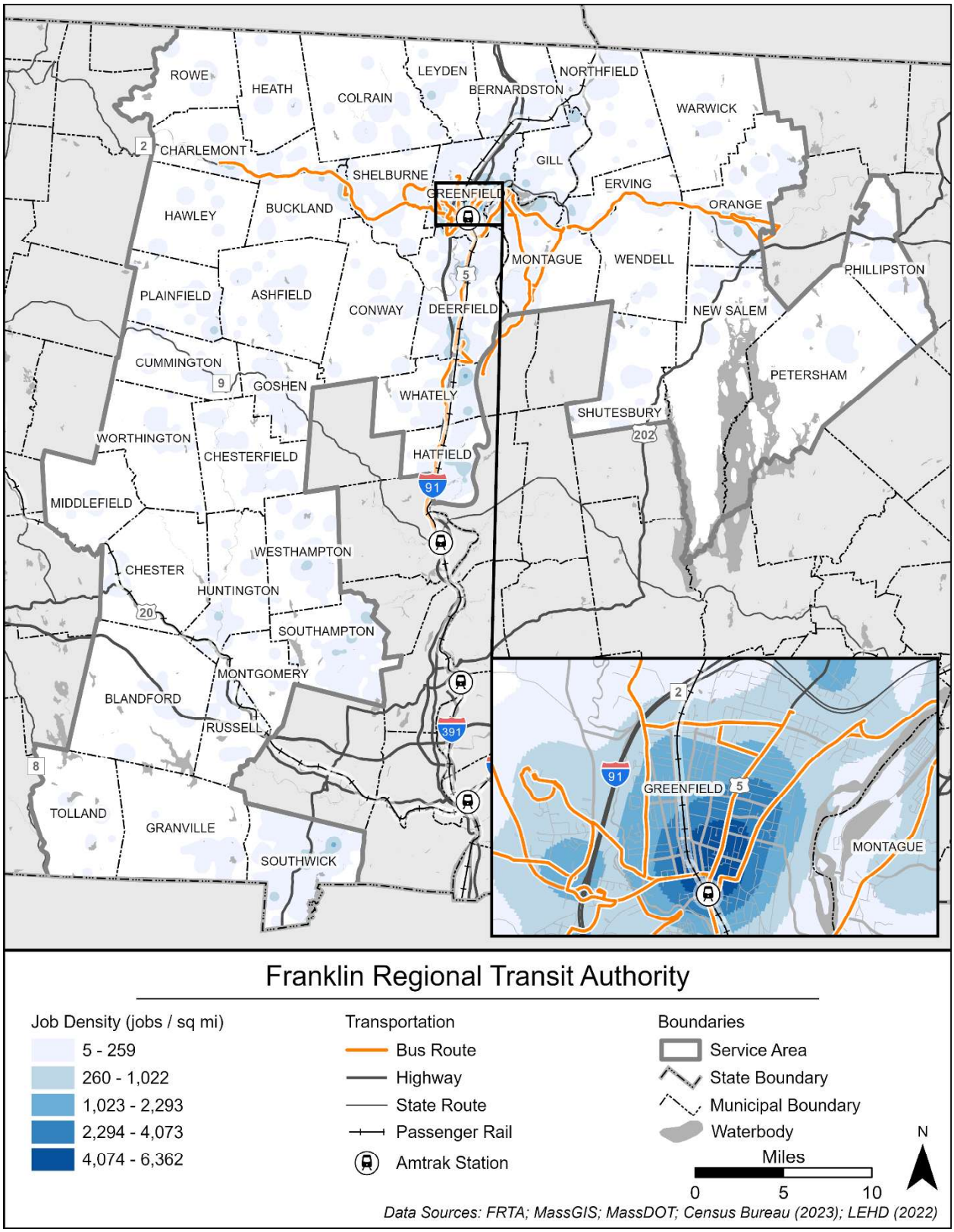
Block group data were used for this analysis (US Census Bureau 2023 and Replica 2024). Transit-oriented variables used for the analysis were:

- Overall population density
- Overall job density
- Density of the population under the age of 18
- Density of the population over the age of 65
- Median household income
- Percentage of the population living below the poverty level
- Percentage of zero-car households
- Percentage of the population other than non-Hispanic white
- Percentage of the population with disabilities
- Number of existing transit trips[2]

The results of the analysis are shown in Figure 33. Overall, FRTA service is located in areas that are home to populations with the highest propensity to ride transit. Greenfield overall had many block groups with the highest scores (Very High), as did Turners Falls, Orange, and Shelburne Falls. Additionally, Deerfield received a High transit score.

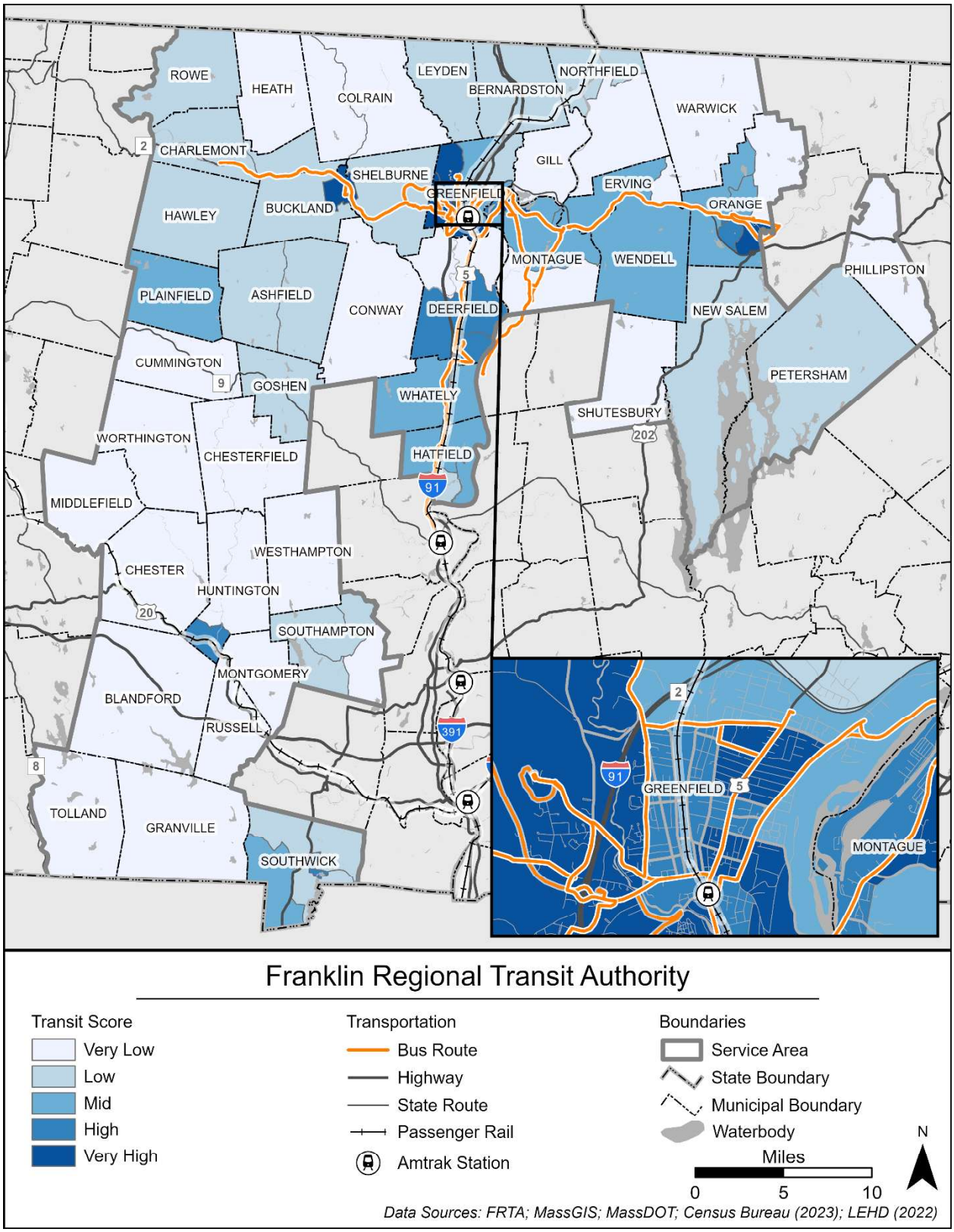
[2] While demographic data are all from the 2022 ACS 5-year estimates, this statistic is from Replica.

Figure 32. Job Density



Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 33. Transit Score



Source: AECOM (2025)

5.3 Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Outreach and engagement for FRTA's CRTP was undertaken through virtual stakeholder meetings and an online survey. Additional outreach activities included a pop-up event and social media promotion of survey links. The activities were carried out in 2025, and a diverse range of voices and perspectives were captured to support CRTP development.

Key takeaways from these combined efforts include support for:

- FRTA service. Across all outreach formats, participants affirmed an overall satisfaction with FRTA services.
- Service as a necessity. Stakeholders and survey respondents expressed that many riders have limited or no access to a personal vehicle and depend on FRTA service to get to work, school, and medical appointments.
- Improvements to service frequency, coverage, and weekend access. Survey respondents and stakeholders called for more frequent service, expanded routes, and weekend availability.

These takeaways indicate that FRTA riders and stakeholders value and depend on the transit service it provides and would like FRTA to expand coverage, increase frequency, and expand weekend access. They were used in identifying the needs of FRTA and the population it serves as well as in developing the specific recommendations listed in Chapter 8 of this CRTP.

Subsequent sections detail feedback collected during all of FRTA's engagement efforts.

5.3.1 Stakeholder Meetings

FRTA held two meetings with key stakeholders to get CRTP feedback.

5.3.1.1 Virtual Stakeholder Meeting 1

- Topic: Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan
- Date and time: July 23, 2025, 10 AM to 11 PM
- Location: Virtually, through Zoom

Attendees

FRTA's first meeting with stakeholders featured representatives from councils of governments, town representatives, local organizations, COAs, educational institutions, and other community members. More than 45 people joined the conversation and activities virtually.

Agenda

- Welcome
- Introductions
- Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan (CRTP)
- Feedback: Live Polls
- Q&A
- Next Steps

Interactive Activities

FRTA solicited comments from attendees through two activities: a live poll function and a whiteboard activity.

Poll Activity

During the meeting, a live poll with five questions was administered.

Question 1: Participants were asked if the community they serve uses FRTA transportation services and, if yes, whether they knew what the most popular reasons are. They were asked to select three. Responses included:

- Shopping (57 percent)
- Medical (64 percent)
- Work (50 percent)
- Social/entertainment (14 percent)
- Other (14 percent)

Question 2: If participants chose "other," they were asked to provide details, which included:

- To get to the Senior Community Center
- Organization that works with immigrants
- Education – I work at GCC

Question 3: Participants were asked, based on feedback from their communities, how satisfied they were with FRTA services. Four respondents answered the question- three selected "neutral", and one selected "satisfied".

In open discussion after the first three questions, comments included:

- FRTA is used for work and health care, as many don't drive.
- Free service has been appreciated.
- Service is not as frequent as people would like, weekends can be particularly tough.
- A community in Hatfield may not be aware of where stops are.
- People in New Salem would like FRTA to send flyers or information to the COA.

Question 4: Participants were asked if the communities they work with use the weekend or evening service and, if yes, which day or time was the "most popular" or "least popular."

For "most popular," answers included:

- Saturday (two responses)
- Unknown (two responses)
- Weekdays
- Yes, evenings and weekends are both popular
- Yes (two responses)

For "least popular," answers included:

- Sunday (two responses)
- Unknown (two responses)

Question 5: Participants were asked if, to their knowledge, there are other partnerships FRTA should explore or underserved areas, including organizations, schools/universities, business parks, or other partners/areas. Answers included:

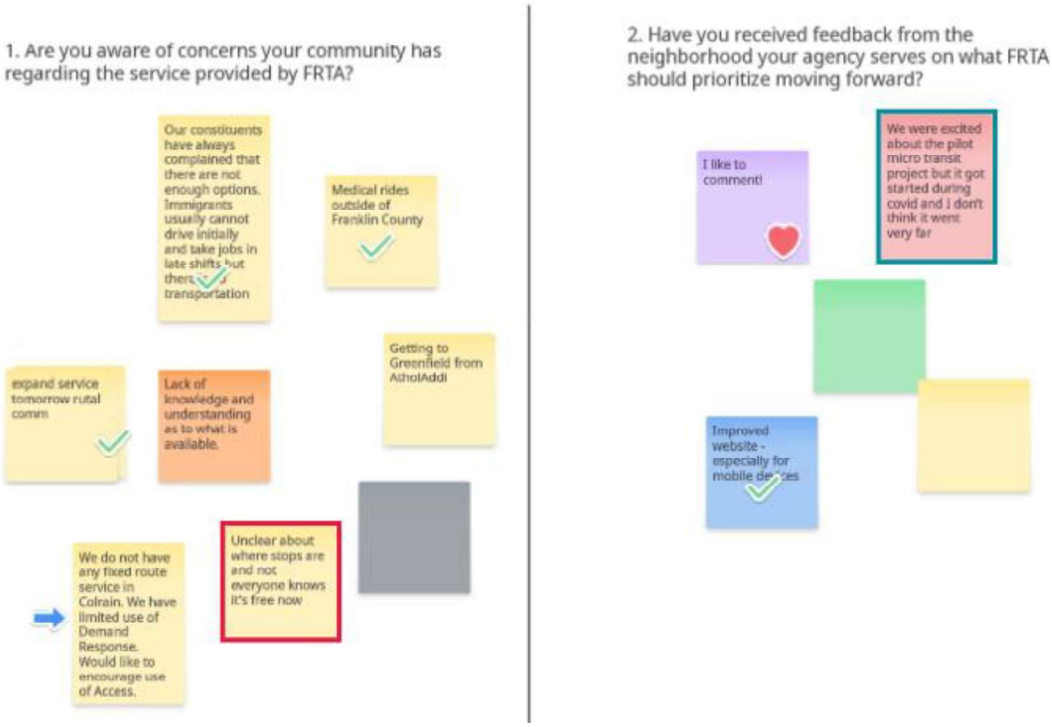
- Not sure how this would work for us; pretty rural and hard to navigate.
- Community health centers and Community Action.
- A big gap in service is medical rides to destinations outside Franklin County. Students from Northfield Mt. Hermon campus have also expressed a desire for transit service.
- C & S Grocery Supply is the biggest employer in town; it may be worth talking to them.
- More demand-response.
- Connections to Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) service.
- Yes.
- Not sure what you are even offering.

Whiteboard Activity

During an interactive whiteboard activity (Figure 34) participants were asked to answer two questions with open-ended responses:

- Are you aware of concerns your community has regarding the service provided by FRTA?
- Have you received feedback from the neighborhood your agency serves on what FRTA should prioritize moving forward?

Figure 34. Interactive Whiteboard Activity at Virtual Stakeholder Meeting 1



Answers for the question, "Are you aware of concerns your community has regarding the service provided by FRTA?" included:

- Our constituents have always complained that there are not enough options. Immigrants usually cannot drive initially and take jobs with late shifts but there's no transportation.
- Medical rides outside of Franklin County.

- Expand service to more rural communities.
- Getting to Greenfield from Athol.
- Lack of knowledge and understanding as to what is available.
- We do not have any fixed route service in Colrain. We have limited use of demand response. We would like to encourage use of Access (microtransit).
- Unclear about where stops are and not everyone knows service is free now.

Answers for the question, "Have you received feedback from the neighborhood your agency serves on what FRTA should prioritize moving forward?" included:

- We were excited about the pilot microtransit project, but it got started during COVID and I don't think it went very far.
- Improved website—especially for mobile devices.

In open discussion after the first three questions, comments included:

- Factories in Turners Falls run continuously and people who apply for those jobs need to get there.
- MassHire can work with companies that have openings at unpopular times.
- Some rides are provided for medical appointments in Springfield and Holyoke, but transportation is a challenge for irregular appointments.
- Classes at GCC end late and FRTA service ends at 7 PM.
- GCC has a resource fair in September.

Key Takeaways

The following are key takeaways from the first stakeholder meeting.

- Medical rides are a high need and sometimes a challenge for riders.
- There are employers with times that do not fit FRTA schedules.
- Older adults and COAs need more information on FRTA services.

5.3.1.2 Virtual Stakeholder Meeting 2

- Topic: Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan
- Date and time: August 19, 2025, 4 PM to 5 PM
- Location: Virtually through Zoom

Attendees

FRTA's second meeting with stakeholders featured representatives from councils of governments, town representatives, local organizations, COAs, educational institutions, and other community members. Over 30 people joined the virtual meeting. The second virtual stakeholder meeting was held on a different day and at a different time to accommodate different audiences and provide ample opportunity for stakeholders to provide input. The second virtual meeting followed the same format as the first meeting.

Agenda

- Welcome
- Introductions

- Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan (CRTP)
- Feedback: Live Polls
- Q&A
- Next Steps

Interactive Activities

FRTA solicited comments from attendees through two activities: a live poll function and a whiteboard activity.

Poll Activity

During the meeting, a live poll with five questions was administered.

Question 1: Participants were asked if the community they serve uses FRTA transportation services and, if yes, do they know what the most popular reasons are. They were asked to select three. Responses included:

- Shopping (55 percent)
- Medical (64 percent)
- Work (27 percent)
- Social/entertainment (18 percent)
- School (27 percent)
- Other (9 percent)

Question 2: If participants chose "other," they were asked to share details, which included:

- Only arranged rides for needed older adults is provided.

Question 3: Participants were asked, based on their community feedback, how satisfied they were with FRTA services. Responses included:

- Very satisfied (9 percent)
- Satisfied (55 percent)
- Neutral (36 percent)
- Dissatisfied (0 percent)
- Very dissatisfied (0 percent)

In open discussion after the first three questions, comments included:

- MassHire is looking for ways to get more drivers to FRTA to expand services; it's a systematic problem.
- Respondent would like FRTA to find a way to make bus stops safer along Route 2 corridor.

Question 4: Participants were asked if the communities they work with use the weekend or evening service and, if yes, which day or time is the "most popular" or "least popular."

For most popular, answers included:

- No.
- I know it is used, but I don't know what the most popular times are.

- We consistently hear this as a need, but it is not available.
- Weekend service is not available to our community.
- Not available in our area.
- N/A.
- Saturday.

For "least popular," answers included:

- No.
- Not sure which days/times are more popular.
- Specifics are not always provided.
- N/A.
- Evenings.

Question 5: Participants were asked if, to their knowledge, there are other partnerships FRTA should explore or underserved areas, including organizations, schools/universities, business parks or other partners/areas. Answers included:

- Increasing collaboration with Worcester County, if possible, to serve North Quabbin towns.
- Hilltowns.
- No recommendations.
- We are a small community but would like to see fixed routes.
- PVTA, Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA), Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA).
- Unsure.
- I would welcome an opportunity to discuss more 1:1 with someone at FRTA about how at LifePath we are focusing on sharing more information about transportation options to medical appointments for older adults.

In open discussion after the first three questions, comments included:

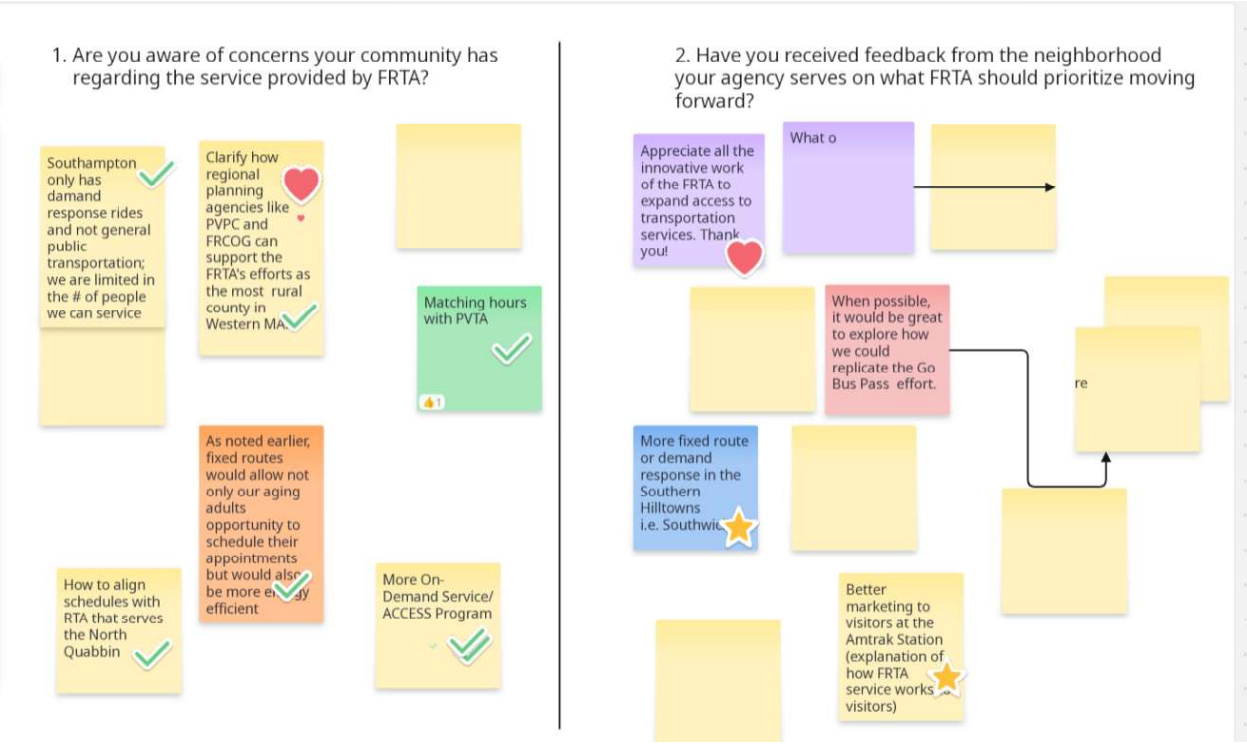
- Bernardston would like to see fixed routes for all to be able to use.

Whiteboard Activity

During an interactive whiteboard activity (Figure 35) participants were asked to answer two questions with open-ended responses:

- Are you aware of concerns your community has regarding the service provided by FRTA?
- Have you received feedback from the neighborhood your agency serves on what FRTA should prioritize moving forward?

Figure 35. Interactive Whiteboard Activity at Virtual Stakeholder Meeting 2



Answers for the question, "Are you aware of concerns your community has regarding the service provided by FRTA?" included:

- Southampton only has demand response rides and not general public transportation; we are limited in the number of people we can service.
- Clarify how regional planning agencies like Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) and Franklin Regional Council of Governmentts (FRCOG) can support the FRTA's efforts as the most rural country in Western Massachusetts.
- Matching hours with PVTA.
- More on-demand service/Access program service.
- How to align schedules with RTA that serves the North Quabbin.
- As noted earlier, fixed routes would allow not only our aging adults opportunity to schedule their appointments but would also be more energy efficient.

Answers for the question, "Have you received feedback from the neighborhood your agency serves on what FRTA should prioritize moving forward?" included:

- Appreciate all the innovative work of the FRTA to expand access to transportation services. Thank you!
- When possble, it would be great to explore how we could replicate the Go Bus Pass effort.
- More fixed route or demand-response in the Southern Hilltowns, i.e. Southwick.
- Better marketing to visitors at the Amtrak Station (explanation of how FRTA service works to visitors).

In open discussion after the first three questions, comments included:

- Senior centers all over the county and Village Movement tend to be the best sources on what is happening in the region and needs greater engagement from FRTA.
- It is daunting for older adults to try to find a ride.
- FRTA working with the Opioid Task Force has an impact.

Key Takeaways

The following are key takeaways from the second stakeholder meeting.

- Stakeholders report riders in their comminities primarily use FRTA for shopping and medical appointments and are mostly satisfied with the service, though there are areas to expand to.
- Stakeholders expressed a desire for more or expanded FRTA services to their areas including microtransit in the more rural areas.
- Connectivity to other RTAs is also of interest to atendees, as they see it as an unexplored opporutnitty.

5.3.2 Pop-Up Event

FRTA held an in-person pop-up to distribute information, advertise the survey, and seek public feedback. Multiple riders were engaged, and they were invited to share their thoughts on current transit services, future improvements, priorities for regional mobility, or anything on their mind. Materials including flyers with the survey link as well as informational materials for FRTA were given out, and feedback was collected on a range of topics.

- Locations: GCC, Main Building, Greenfield, MA
- Date and time: September 9, 2025, 12 PM to 1:30 PM

The following are key takeaways from the pop-up event.

- Fare-free service is valued.
- There is a positive response to FRTA at GCC.

5.3.3 Public Survey Effort

As a primary tool to gather feedback from current riders, FRTA staff developed an online survey. The purpose of the survey was to get a better understanding of stakeholder preferences regarding current services and gather feedback about the desire for potential improvements or changes.

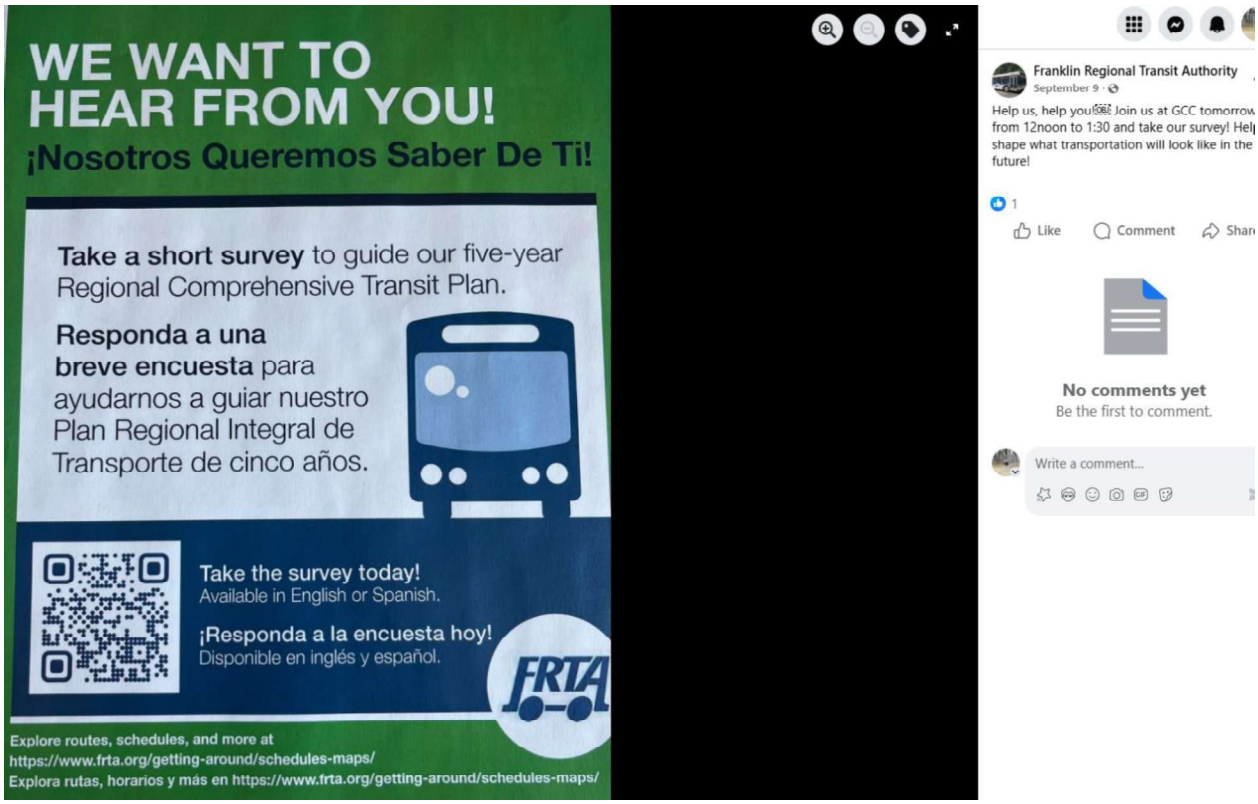
5.3.3.1 Survey Outreach

To promote participation in the online survey, FRTA shared it through multiple channels:

- FRTA leveraged a robust stakeholder list and sent multiple email blasts.
- In addition, social media graphics were used for a social media campaign in English and Spanish (Figure 36).
- The FRTA website also displayed a promotional graphic to encourage ridership to participate in the survey and provide some knowledge on what the feedback was for.
- Flyers were distributed.

The survey was designed to be mobile-friendly. The survey link was accompanied by a QR code to enable a quick scan using a smart phone to direct users immediately to the survey.

Figure 36. FRTA Social Media Post



5.3.3.2 Survey Results Summary

FRTA's online survey opened to the public July 29, 2025, and closed September 26, 2025. The survey, hosted on Microsoft Forms, was available online in both English and Spanish.

Of the 298 responses collected using online and paper surveys, 294 people (99 percent), responded in English, and 4 people (1 percent) responded in Spanish.

5.3.3.3 Key Takeaways

The following are key takeaways from the public survey; for complete results, see Appendix C.

- The majority of respondents were from Greenfield.
- The majority of respondents ride at least weekly.
- The majority of respondents either sometimes or never have access to a car and many would not be able to make their trips without FRTA.
- Work is the largest trip purpose, though uses for social, shopping, medical reasons, and school are also numerous.
- There is a very high satisfaction with FRTA.
- There is a desire for earlier or later service.
- Many factors would increase ridership including easier websites/schedules and stops with closer proximity to destinations.
- There is a desire for more frequency and expanded weekend hours.
- Many respondents are looking for more service to the Big Y as well as Northampton/PVTA connections.

6 Performance Measures

Performance measurement is a foundational component of enhancing operational efficiency, improving the customer experience, ensuring safety, and meeting the numerous other goals that a transit agency may have. This chapter outlines the performance measures for FRTA and targets for each of them. Performance data can be found in Chapter 4.

6.1 MassDOT Performance Management Program

FRTA reports performance data on a quarterly basis across a variety of metrics as described in this section. The targets are updated annually as mutually agreed upon by FRTA and MassDOT. Where an RTA is performing well, there is an opportunity for sharing of best practices to other RTAs in the Commonwealth. Where an RTA is not meeting targets, this is an opportunity to assess avenues for potential improvements.

A summary of performance measures is provided in Table 22.

Table 22. Performance Measures Overview

Category	Metric	Definition	Desired Direction
Ridership	Unlinked passenger trips (UPT)	Number of boardings on public transportation vehicles (UPT)	Higher
Ridership	UPT per vehicle revenue mile (VRM)	UPT divided by total miles operated while vehicles are in service (revenue miles)	Higher
Ridership	UPT per vehicle revenue hour (VRH)	UPT divided by total hours operated while vehicles are in service (revenue hours)	Higher
Financial	Operating expenses per VRM	Total fully allocated operating expense divided by revenue miles	Lower
Financial	Operating expenses per VRH	Total fully allocated operating expense divided by revenue hours	Lower
Financial	Operating expenses per UPT	Total fully allocated operating expense divided by revenue UPT	Lower
Financial	Farebox recovery ratio (FRR)	Total fully allocated operating expense divided by farebox revenue	Higher
Customer Service & Satisfaction	On-time performance (OTP)	Vehicle departures that meet the RTA definition of "on-time" (see Section 6.1.3)	Higher
Customer Service & Satisfaction	Scheduled trips operated (STO)	Proportion of scheduled trips which are operated (i.e., not "dropped")	Higher

Category	Metric	Definition	Desired Direction
Asset Management	State of Good Repair	Proportion of capital assets beyond useful life (see Section 6.1.4)	Lower
Safety	Various	Multiple safety metrics and targets	Varies

Source: NTD Database Manual

6.1.1 Ridership

Ridership is reported as UPTs. Each boarding is counted and summed toward the overall UPT metric. This metric is also normalized to VRMs service provided. Monthly data is submitted quarterly and compared to the annual target set by FRTA. Table 23 shows FRTA ridership targets. FRTA has included a new target for commuter bus service to monitor ridership of the forthcoming Link 413 commuter service.

Table 23. Ridership Metrics and Targets (FY 2026)

Metric	Fixed Route FY 2026	Demand Response FY 2026	Commuter Bus FY 2026
Unlinked passenger trips (UPT)	170,000	36,000	5,000
UPT per vehicle revenue mile (VRM)	0.32	0.13	0.22
UPT per vehicle revenue hour (VRH)	8.37	1.86	6.15

Source: MassDOT (2025)

6.1.2 Financial

Each RTA differs in the level of service, geographic area, modes operated, and other aspects of its operation, and as such financial metrics are reported normalized to revenue miles, revenue hours, and UPTs. Typically, each RTA verifies its financial data annually through an end-of-year audit. Therefore, annual data are submitted for comparison against performance targets.

Farebox recovery ratio (FRR) is a measure of revenue collected through fares as a ratio to operating expenses. As of FY 2026, all RTAs will operate fare-free fixed route service and fare-free complementary demand response (though "premium" service beyond federal ADA requirements may still charge fares). As such, the target for fixed route is zero percent and demand response is reflective of FRR for these premium services. FRTA financial targets are displayed in Table 24.

Table 24. Financial Metrics and Targets (FY 2026)

Metric	Fixed Route FY 2026	Demand Response FY 2026	Commuter Bus FY 2026
Operating expenses per VRM	$5.90	$8.56	$7.93
Operating expenses per VRH	$162.00	$127.00	$200.00
Operating expenses per UPT	$18.23	$68.88	$35.72

Metric	Fixed Route FY 2026	Demand Response FY 2026	Commuter Bus FY 2026
Farebox recovery ratio (FFR)	0.00%	3.63%	6.00%

Source: MassDOT (2025)

6.1.3 Customer Service and Satisfaction

Reliability of service is an important element to providing transit that meets customer needs. Therefore, customer service and satisfaction are measured through on-time performance of fixed route and demand response modes. The definitions of on-time performance for each mode are:

- Fixed Route: Vehicle departs at the scheduled departure time or within five minutes after.
- Demand Response: Vehicle arrives either within 15 minutes early or 15 minutes after the promised pick-up time.

Scheduled trips operated also measures service reliability, as "dropped" trips may suggest labor capacity limitations, equipment failure, or other operational constraints. From the customer's perspective, they are waiting for a bus that does not arrive, which is especially challenging for routes with less frequent service.

Monthly data are submitted quarterly and compared against the annual target. Table 25 shows FRTA customer service targets for fixed route and demand response service.

Table 25. Customer Service and Satisfaction Metrics and Targets (FY 2026)

Metric	Fixed Route FY 2026	Demand Response FY 2026	Commuter Bus FY 2026
On-time performance	95.00%	90.00%	95.00%
Scheduled trips operated	95.00%	95.00%	95.00%

Source: MassDOT (2025)

6.1.4 Asset Management

The state of good repair for capital assets is a priority of MassDOT, FTA, and FRTA. Equipment in poor condition can result in reliability issues, safety risks, poor customer perceptions, and other problems that impede a successful transit operation. Each RTA has a TAM Plan that lays out the condition of facilities and priorities for capital improvements. The TAM Plan must be submitted every four years or whenever the RTA updates its targets, whichever comes first. Targets are reviewed annually and any updates are submitted to the National Transit Database (NTD). Table 26 breaks down FRTA targets for the percentage of vehicles that have exceeded their useful life, by vehicle type. FRTA is part of the MassDOT Group TAM Plan, which is also inclusive of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe. As such, the targets are inclusive of both systems' asset inventories.

Table 26. Asset Management Metrics and Targets (FY 2025)

Metric	FY 2025
Vehicles – Bus	0.00%

Metric	FY 2025
Vehicles – Cutaway	14.00%
Vehicles – Minivan	0.00%
Vehicles – Van	68.00%
Equipment – Automobiles	0.00%
Equipment – Trucks and Other Rubber Tire Vehicles	25.00%
Facilities – Admin/Maintenance	0.00%

Source: MassDOT (2025)

6.1.5 Safety

Safety is the number-one priority when delivering transit service. As a non-urbanized system, FRTA is not subject to many of the federal safety reporting requirements. Nonetheless, FRTA reports monthly preventable accidents per 100,000 VRMs on a quarterly basis against their annual target. Safety targets for preventable accidents are shown in Table 27.

Table 27. Safety Targets (FY 2026)

Metric	Fixed Route FY 2026	Demand Response FY 2026	Commuter Bus FY 2026
Preventable Accidents Target (per 100,000 VRM)	1.00	1.00	0.50

Source: MassDOT (2025)

6.1.6 Annual Performance

Two annual performance metrics reported to MassDOT vary by RTA. Each RTA may identify and report a metric and target of their choosing, and a second metric is chosen through the Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan process based on prioritized recommendations. The two metrics for FRTA are:

- RTA-Choice Metric: Ridership and on-time performance for expanded fixed route service along existing routes (Route 21, Route 31, Route 41, and Route 23)
- RTA-Choice Metric Tied to CRTP: Number of trips booked, trips completed, and number of denials for new demand response service in Tolland and Granville

Other annual performance metrics are external partnerships and fleet composition by fuel type. Both are reported annually and are not compared against an annual target. Table 28 shows the breakdown of FRTA's fleet by fuel type and the number of partnerships by service type.

Table 28. Annual Performance Metrics (FY 2026)

Metric	Fixed Route (FY 2026)	Demand Response (FY 2026)
Percent fleet composition - Electric	0%	0%
Percent fleet composition - Hybrid	0%	0%

Metric	Fixed Route (FY 2026)	Demand Response (FY 2026)
Percent fleet composition – Compressed Natural Gas	0%	0%
Percent fleet composition - Diesel	68.42%	11%
Percent fleet composition - Gasoline	31.58%	89%
External Partnerships	0	6

Source: MassDOT (2025)

7 Trends and Uncertainties

As part of the CRTP update, FRTA examined potential alternative scenarios based on future uncertainties and market trends. This chapter describes likely market trends and uncertainties, how they could impact transit ridership in the FRTA region over the next five years, and how FRTA could address them.

In developing this CRTP, recommendations were drafted that align with different ridership scenarios given their operational, policy, and financial implications. Organizing recommendations by ridership scenario enables FRTA to use the CRTP to decide which recommendations are most applicable to current conditions. Key topics and solutions that arose during the scenario discussions for FRTA to consider in the future are presented in this chapter.

7.1 Future Uncertainties

As FRTA prepares for the next five years, it is important to recognize and plan for trends that are both highly impactful and deeply uncertain. These uncertainties may define the operating circumstances of FRTA, possibly influencing factors such as public expectations of transit, service models, funding sources, transit technologies and infrastructure, and ultimately ridership demand. The following section outlines critical uncertainties that were explored during the workshop due to their potential to plausibly shape the future of FRTA's operations.

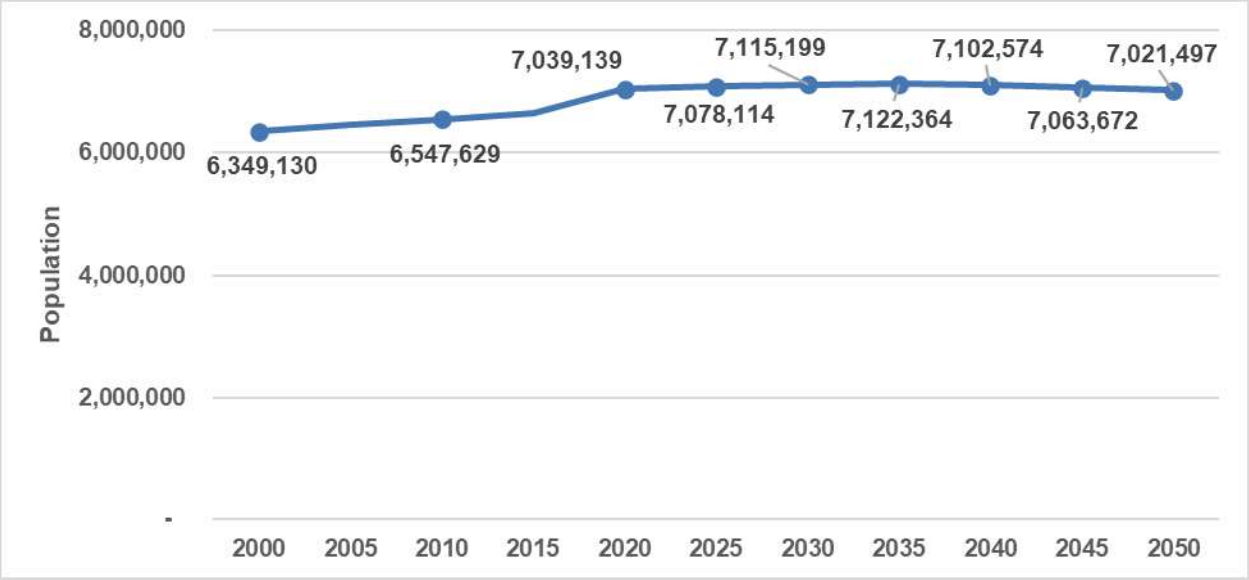
7.1.1 Population and Demographics

Population trends—including migration and aging—could impact transit ridership in the FRTA region.

7.1.1.1 General Population Trends

Massachusetts has experienced consistent population growth throughout the twenty-first century; however, as seen in Figure 37, the overall state population is projected to plateau with little-to-no growth from 2025 to 2035 and then decline from 2035 to 2050 (Renski 2015). This slow down and eventual decline in population is largely attributable to two factors: domestic out-migration and international migration uncertainty.

Figure 37. Long-term Population Projections for Massachusetts (2000-2050)



Source: UMass Donahue Institute 2025

Population and demographic trends are a defining influence on transportation needs, the quality of transit service, and the cultural expectations around transit. A stagnant or declining population may manifest in a variety of ways for FRTA, including:

- A reduced labor supply could present significant challenges to future workforce recruitment efforts.
- A small ridership base may reduce demand for transit and present the need for FRTA to make service changes.
- Changing demographics may shift public expectations about the function, frequency, and quality of regional transit service.

All of these present uncertainties could influence FRTA's operations over the next five years.

7.1.1.2 Aging Constituency

Massachusetts' population is both older and aging at a rate that exceeds the national average. As of 2025, 20.4 percent of the state was 65 years or older. This is projected to increase to 22.3 percent of the state's population by 2030. Not only does the rate of aging in Massachusetts outpace national averages, but it also exceeds earlier state-level estimates (Renski 2015).

FRTA's ridership base is projected to decline by approximately 2 percent, which will create more pronounced effects on transit service compared to statewide estimates (UMass Donahue Institute 2025). Massachusetts' increasingly older population places more pressure on demand response transportation services. An aging population could impact FRTA through:

- Increased costs and workforce required to serve increased demand response service.
- A reduced pool of potential transit workers as more residents retire from the workforce.

7.1.2 Affordability

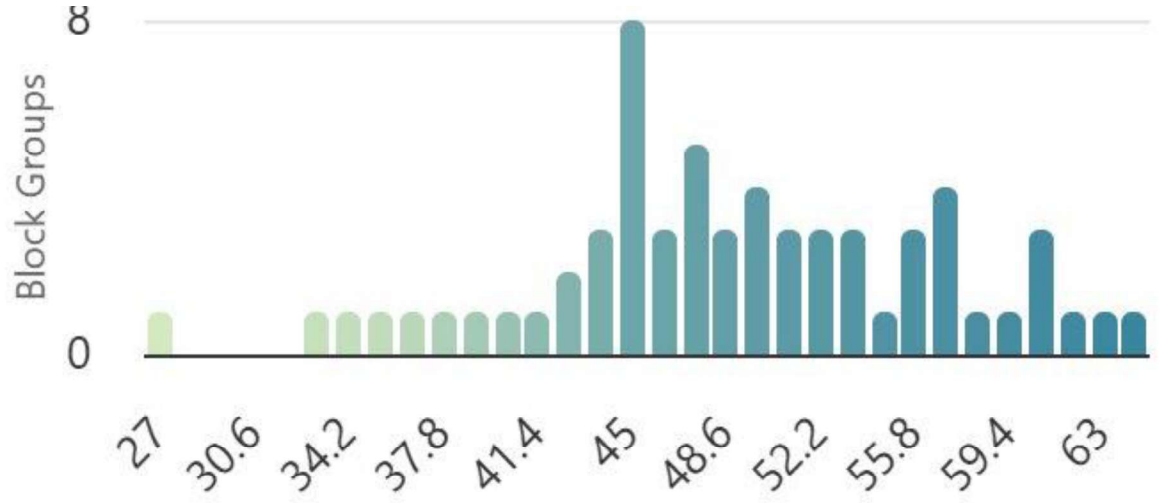
Massachusetts has some of the highest living costs in the United States. High and rapidly growing housing prices are at the center of the Commonwealth's affordability dilemma.

In tandem with housing costs, transportation expenses have also imposed an outsized burden on Massachusetts residents in recent years. According to Transportation for Massachusetts' 2024 survey, 71 percent of Massachusetts residents report housing cost burden, while 57 percent are burdened by transportation costs (Transportation for Massachusetts 2024). Among FRTA's ridership base, residents spend an estimated 45 percent of their income on housing and transportation expenses as seen in Figure 38.

Cost is one of the single-most influential factors in determining an individual's place of residence and transportation needs. Affordability issues that could impact FRTA include:

- Potential for increased sprawl development and longer commute distances.
- Increased costs to serve longer trip length.
- Additional service demand in lower cost rural areas if people relocate from higher cost urban areas.

Figure 38. Franklin County Housing and Transportation Costs as a Percentage of Residents' Income



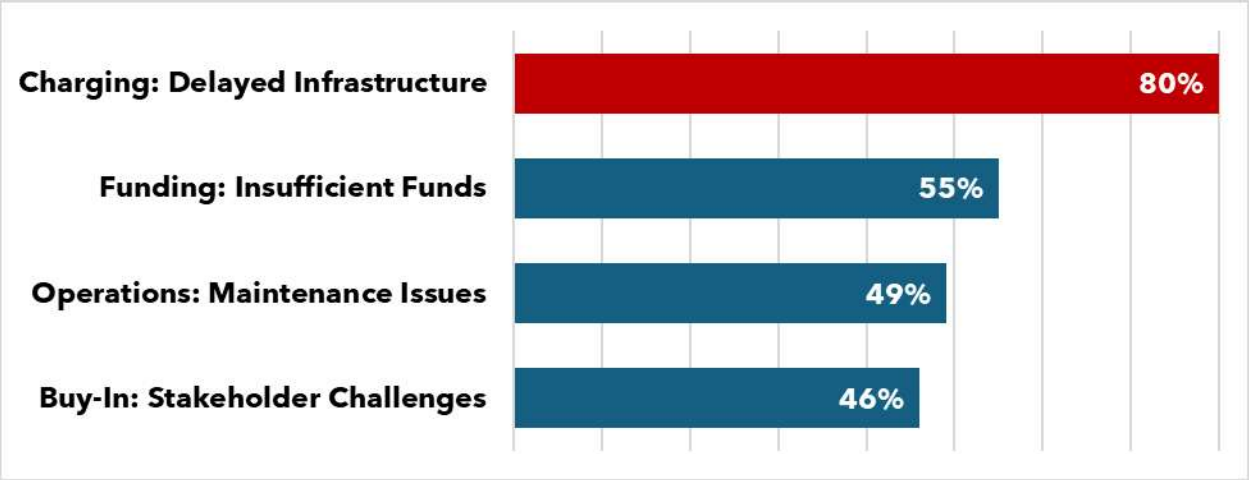
Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology, 2025

7.1.3 Technology

Transit agencies across Massachusetts and the United States have employed a diversity of approaches and levels of initiative towards fleet modernization. Fleet modernization within RTAs has also become highly contingent upon available funding streams at both the federal and state levels. At the federal level, the FTA Section 5339(c) Low or No Emission "Low-No" grant program has shifted priority from "no-emissions" procurements to funding low-emissions vehicle types (Ekbatani 2025).

Despite federal policy changes, Massachusetts has maintained fleet modernization goals. However, inadequate energy infrastructure has consistently presented a significant challenge to adoption of zero emission vehicles. As seen in Figure 39, in a 2025 survey, 80 percent of transit agencies reported infrastructure delays as the largest challenge to adopting zero emission vehicles (Optibus 2025). Insufficient electrical capacity, complex negotiations, and long lead times with utility providers can delay charging infrastructure.

Figure 39. Inadequate Charging Infrastructure is the Leading Obstacle to Fleet Modernization



Source: Optibus 2025 State of Public Transportation Industry Survey

Uncertainties surrounding travel demand from remote work and virtual services remain. These uncertainties could lead to:

- Increased demand from a greater return to in-person work
- Long-term normalization of the remote lifestyle could disrupt the public's perceived function of public transit

7.1.4 Funding for Transit

The stability and size of funding streams is a critical component factoring in FRTA's level of service and operational success. At the federal level, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) has provided over $550 billion in funding towards transportation programs across the United States and is expected to provide $660 billion across its total five-year lifespan. Funding in the amount of $116 billion in IIJA funds is allocated towards transit programs, which represents a 40 percent expansion in federal transit funding compared to past levels (Bureau of Transportation Statistics 2025).

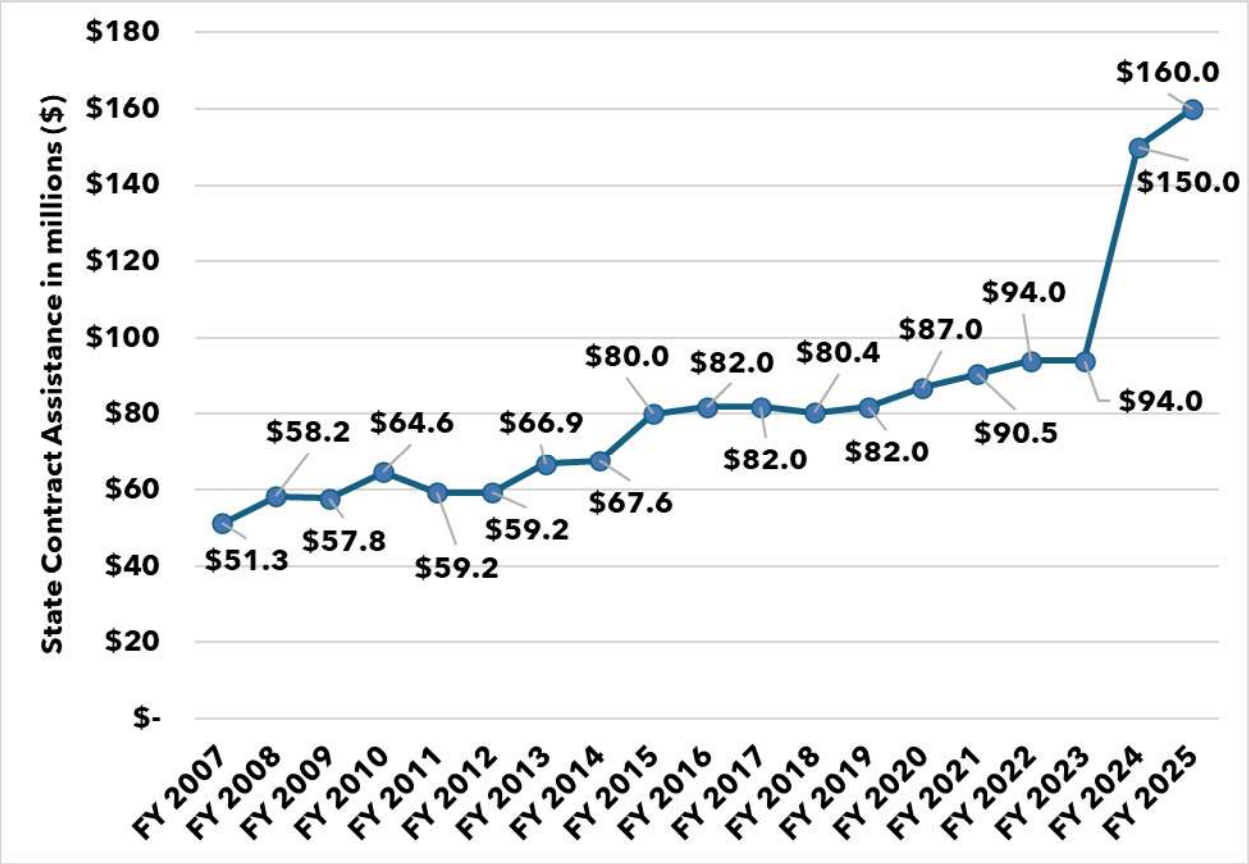
However, the IIJA is scheduled to expire at the end of FY 2026. Despite the unprecedented levels of transit funding and investment the act has facilitated, an immediate funding replacement is not guaranteed. Intermediate funding extensions have occurred between each of the last five federal transportation funding laws, comprising 7.5 years of the last three decades. Given this historical record, the level of federal transit funding is uncertain over the next five years.

State funding for Massachusetts' RTAs has consistently grown in recent years. Since 2020, total funding provided to all RTAs through State Contract Assistance has nearly doubled from $87 million to $160 million, as shown in Figure 40. In addition to general operating funds, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has implemented additional funding through initiative-based channels, such as discretionary grant programs and fare-free pilots.

Fare-free transit at FRTA is on a trajectory to become long term as a product of state funding. Thirty-five million dollars was appropriated in FY 2026 for the implementation or continuation of fare-free transit at all RTAs. Additionally, a statutory amendment to Chapter 161B of Massachusetts General Laws now prohibits all RTAs from charging a fare for transit services but still maintains that fare-free transit be subject to annual funding appropriation. (For more information on fare-free transit and FRTA's fare policy, see Appendix A.)

Fare-free transit has demonstrated the potential to positively impact ridership at FRTA. However, the dependency on the Commonwealth's appropriation of future fare-free transit funding introduces uncertainty and could influence FRTA's operations.

Figure 40. State Funding for Massachusetts' RTAs from FY 2007 to FY 2025



Source: MassDOT 2025

7.2 2020 Alternative Scenarios

FRTA last updated its CRTP in 2020, at the peak of the pandemic, when it was facing many uncertainties that were largely outside of its control. The entire transportation industry was grappling with unknowns about the long-term impact of the pandemic on overall ridership, and whether remote work would drive increases in sprawl. Like all transit agencies, FRTA was unsure which routes and services would recover ridership first and which would see a slower recovery. Forces beyond the pandemic such as national economic policy, unemployment rates, education policy, availability of funding for capital investments, and municipal land use plans were also outside of its control.

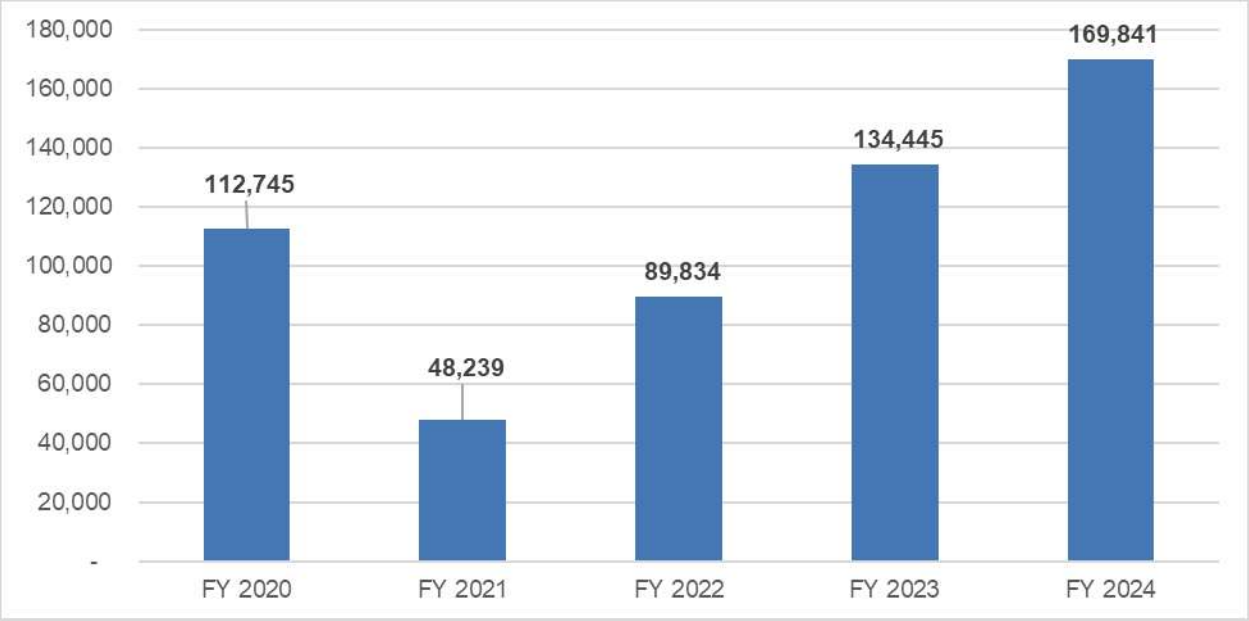
In order to address these uncertainties, FRTA defined three qualitative ridership scenarios to map out the future of transit demand through 2025. The three scenarios were:

- Low Ridership: Ridership that remains below 60 percent of 2019 levels.
- Medium Ridership: Stable ridership between 60 and 85 percent of 2019 levels.
- High Ridership: Ridership that returns to 86 percent or more of 2019 levels.

Ridership data from FY 2020 to FY 2024 indicate that FRTA has experienced the high ridership scenario (Figure 41).

FRTA's foresight in planning for these potential scenarios ensured it was well-prepared. This enabled it to effectively use the 2020 CRTP recommendations that aligned with the high ridership scenario for informed decision-making, including changes to service and capital assets.

Figure 41. FRTA Annual System Ridership (2020-2024)



Source: MassDOT 2025

7.3 Looking Ahead: 2025 to 2030 Scenario Planning

Given that varied and numerous uncertainties will always affect the FRTA region, it is important to continue to plan for their impact on transit. While many of these trends lie beyond FRTA's control, how they unfold will likely have a significant impact on ridership. FRTA can proactively respond by planning for different ridership levels over the next five years. As part of this process, FRTA again explored three different ridership scenarios:

- Low ridership
- Medium ridership
- High ridership

Each scenario is detailed in the following sections.

7.3.1 Low Ridership

Low ridership for FRTA is characterized by ridership numbers across services remaining at pre-pandemic levels (i.e., 2019 ridership) over the next five years (2025 to 2030). This scenario could occur if demand response ridership recovers to pre-pandemic levels and continues to grow steadily, but fixed route ridership does not grow at a similar rate.

Several factors could potentially contribute to this scenario:

- A severe economic downturn and widespread unemployment could significantly reduce work-related commuting.
- The continued prevalence of remote work could further suppress demand for commuting services.

- Demographic shifts, such as an aging population, might lead to a decline in school-based ridership.

Together, these dynamics could position FRTA to experience existing levels of transit utilization.

In response to these potential impacts, FRTA considered the following questions:

- FRTA may need to adjust routes, schedules, or staffing to better match ridership demand that does not return to pre-pandemic levels. How will FRTA determine necessary changes in an equitable way?
- How can FRTA reach new riders and lower barriers to using transit?
- Demand response trips could be a larger proportion of FRTA's overall service operations. How will FRTA navigate an increase in operating expenses or shifting staff needs?

7.3.2 Medium Ridership

Medium ridership for FRTA is characterized by ridership numbers across services rising 30 percent over the next five years. This scenario could result from a combination of potential factors:

- Stagnant household incomes or high inflation might make personal vehicle ownership less feasible, leading more people to rely on public transit.
- A shift toward more consistent in-office work could increase the volume of work-related commutes.
- A successful service expansion could drive higher demand.

Together, these dynamics could position FRTA to experience considerable growth in transit utilization.

In response to these potential impacts, FRTA considered the following questions:

- Given higher ridership levels, FRTA seeks to expand service; how will FRTA choose where to expand and how?
- FRTA is currently struggling with retaining a full workforce. What strategies or key partnerships can FRTA leverage to assist with this?
- What partnerships can FRTA leverage to meet demand, including unmet needs?
- Would FRTA need additional vehicle capacity to serve this level of ridership?

7.3.3 High Ridership

High ridership for FRTA is characterized by a substantial increase in ridership numbers across services, reaching up to 60 percent above 2025 levels. This scenario could be driven by several potential factors:

- A sharp rise in gas prices may encourage more people to choose public transit over personal vehicles.
- An aging population could lead to a significant increase in demand response ride requests.
- An expansion of service-based industries and tourism economies might create a sustained spike in ridership.

Together, these dynamics could position FRTA to experience a lot of growth in transit utilization.

In response to these potential impacts, FRTA considered the following questions:

- With greatly increased ridership, and commensurate demand for service, FRTA needs to hire more drivers, mechanics, customer service staff, etc. What partnerships with local community colleges or technical high schools might be critical to leverage?
- More service means more vehicles, how will FRTA handle space constraints when acquiring new vehicles?
- If demand response ride requests accelerate, what opportunities can FRTA leverage with COAs and local non-emergency transportation services to accommodate increased demand?
- What strategies could FRTA explore to ensure minimal duplication of services?

7.4 Future Opportunities

Table 29 summarizes the opportunities and corresponding scenarios that could occur over the next five years. Depending on ridership levels, FRTA can determine which strategic opportunities may be applicable to pursue. For items that are applicable regardless of ridership level, "all ridership" is indicated.

Table 29. FRTA Opportunities by Ridership Scenario

Ridership Scenario	Description of Opportunity
All	Continue to partner with GCC to ensure student needs are met.
All	Monitor key performance indicators to confirm service is being delivered to areas with the highest need and demand.
All	Explore ways to increase the pool of volunteer drivers.
Low	Utilize ridership reports to make data-driven decisions on how to balance service with demand and where to reduce service, should funding restraints require.
Low	Conduct public outreach to determine whether there are any major destinations not being served by the existing system that may be impacting ridership.
Low	Identify grant opportunities to fund service expansion to increase ridership.
Medium and High	Leverage software capabilities to more efficiently schedule demand response trips to increase capacity of the existing fleet.
Medium and High	Work with communities within the FRTA service area that are not current participants in the Access microtransit program to join the program to alleviate demands on the paratransit fleet and drivers.
Medium and High	Identify and implement a driver sign-on benefit to draw more prospective employees.
High	Explore potential software solutions or outreach efforts that could help riders plan trips via the fixed route system, rather than scheduling

Ridership Scenario	Description of Opportunity
	paratransit trips.
High	Procure additional vans to serve high demand response ridership.
High	Evaluate projections and model scenarios to plan more proactively for service expansion.

Source: FRTA Alternative Workshop on October 15, 2025

8 Recommendations

The recommendations in this five-year plan emerged from a data-informed process that incorporated existing service and infrastructure conditions, the demographics of the residents of FRTA's service area, historical operational data, stakeholder feedback, industry standards, local policy, statewide objectives, and FRTA priorities. These recommendations establish a framework for advancing strategic service adjustments, capital improvements, and policy initiatives, and make meaningful progress toward better mobility for residents across the region.

8.1 Changes Since the 2020 Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan

The 2020 CRTP included numerous recommendations across a variety of categories, such as service and capital investments. Furthermore, the 2020 CRTP was produced during the COVID-10 pandemic, a time when transit ridership plummeted. Since that plan was produced, there has been a significant infusion of state and federal funding supporting expanded transit service (namely from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) on the federal level, and from the Fair Share Amendment from the Commonwealth).

Investments that FRTA has made with this funding over the past five years guided by the 2020 CRTP helped drive ridership recovery. These included:

- Implementation and expansion of FRTA Access microtransit service
- First-time provision of weekend service on fixed routes
- Expanded demand response service to Shutesbury
- First-time offering mobile payment options for FRTA Access microtransit service
- Integration of Google trip planning into the FRTA website

8.2 Planning for an Uncertain Future

The Commonwealth may face key uncertainties in the next five years that could significantly impact ridership levels. Chapter 7 describes these uncertainties—namely, demographic, economic, and funding shifts—and provides low, medium, and high ridership scenarios that could occur depending on what happens:

- Lower Ridership: If the level of ridership demand over the next five years is on the lower end of expectations, some recommendations are more relevant such as conducting additional outreach to identify areas of high demand currently unserved.
- Medium Ridership: If the level of ridership demand over the next five years is in the mid-level of expectations, more robust service and capital expansions may be warranted. For example, more focus on investing in bus stop infrastructure.
- Higher Ridership: If the level of ridership demand over the next five years is on the higher end of expectations, then the most enhanced service and capital investments may be warranted. This may require FRTA to prioritize capacity building and software solutions to address rider demand.

The recommendations described in this chapter are linked to one or more of these ridership scenarios; in cases where a recommendation applies to all ridership scenarios, it is listed as a "core" recommendation (e.g., coordinating with neighboring RTAs to facilitate regional mobility).

Recommendations have also been assigned one of three "complexity" categories and one of three "impact" categories. Complexity considers barriers to implementation overall, such as costs, coordination needed, or other barriers. Impact refers to the potential benefit to FRTA riders and service area residents. The three categories for both complexity and impact are:

- Low:
  - Complexity: This recommendation would have a low barrier to entry. Either costs or staff time requirements are low, or significant coordination is not required.
  - Impact: This recommendation would be beneficial but likely would not be very noticeable to passengers.
- Medium:
  - Complexity: This recommendation would require cost investment, staff time, or coordination, though not as significant compared to high complexity projects.
  - Impact: This recommendation would benefit some passengers (rather than most) or would be less noticeable than high impact projects.
- High:
  - Complexity: This recommendation would have significant barriers to implementation such as a significant cost or is heavily dependent on external partnerships.
  - Impact: This recommendation would have significant benefits to many passengers and/or residents.

The next section presents recommendations for FRTA to use as a roadmap for the next five years across a variety of topic areas.

8.3 Identified Needs

The needs identified through the data and analysis documented in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 served as the foundation for the recommendations detailed in the subsequent sections. They were further augmented by staff review to confirm applicability to operational realities and ensure alignment with other planning documents (e.g., regional long-range transportation plan).

The recommendations in this plan directly respond to needs identified through FRTA data analysis, market assessment, public and stakeholder input, and needs articulated in other regional and statewide plans. Needs identified through this planning process, as well as the element of the process that identified those needs, are shown in Table 30.

Table 30. Identified Needs

Need	Identified Through…
Improve fixed route frequencies	Existing Conditions Analysis and Stakeholder Engagement
Operate efficient service through limiting redundancies and leveraging technology solutions	FRTA Priorities
Increase opportunities to connect to neighboring service (like PVTA)	Stakeholder Engagement

Need	Identified Through…
Expand access to FRTA service for the general public (not restricted to older adults and disabled passengers)	Market Assessment and Stakeholder Engagement
Expand transit access later in the evening	Stakeholder Engagement
Increase FRTA capacity to evaluate data and proactively plan to meet ridership demand	FRTA Priorities
Document policies and procedures to communicate expectations to passengers and operations staff	FRTA Priorities
Improve the passenger experience	Stakeholder Engagement
Coordinate with operators, including COAs, within the FRTA service area	FRTA Priorities
Maintain a state of good repair	Existing Conditions Analysis
Align FRTA service with areas of high demand and major destinations	Stakeholder Engagement and Market Assessment
Expand capacity of FRTA fleet to serve more riders and reduce capacity constraints	Existing Conditions Analysis
Maintain a sufficient workforce to deliver scheduled service	FRTA Priorities

8.4 Recommendations

These identified needs have driven the development of the recommendations found in this section. FRTA discussed these needs during multiple workshops to identify the suite of recommendations presented below, taking into consideration the potential positive impact, risks, the level of effort to implement, feasibility, uncertainties, and other relevant factors.

The recommendations are organized into categories, including service, capital, policy, performance, coordination, additional studies, and other (Table 1). For recommendations that fall under multiple categories, the column labeled "Also in" highlights their cross-listing.

Table 31. Recommendation Categories

Category	Description
Service	Service recommendations deal with specific routing or other operational considerations of day-to-day provision of service.
Capital	Capital recommendations deal with the purchase or management of equipment, rolling stock, facilities, technology, or other assets.
Policy	Policy recommendations deal with practices and standards adopted by the transit agency to guide how the organization functions.
Data and Performance	Data and performance recommendations deal with using data to improve performance and the rider's experience.

Category	Description
Coordination	Coordination recommendations deal with communications between the transit agency and other regional and statewide partners.
Additional Studies	Additional studies recommendations deal with needs that require further examination in order to make an informed decision.
Other	Other recommendations deal with issues not addressed by the other categories.

8.4.1 Service Recommendations

Service recommendations for FRTA focus on changes to service, either by changing span of service or frequency operated (Table 29). Overall, FRTA aims to expand access through enhanced service on existing routes and new service to underserved areas. Additionally, the expansion of FRTA's Access microtransit service continues to be a priority for the RTA. FRTA intends to operate service in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Table 32. Service Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Complexity	Impact	Also in Category...
1	Expand access to shopping, especially grocery stores (such as by adding an additional weekend trip to Big Y on Route 41).	Medium/ High	Medium	High	Additional Studies
15	Increase frequencies on top performing routes as funding allows. Top performing routes are defined as routes with higher than system average passenger trips per revenue hour and/or routes with the highest year-over-year growth in ridership.	Core	High	High	Data and Performance
16	Operate all FRTA routes with frequencies of 1 hour or better.	Core	High	High	N/A
17	Evaluate potential extension of Route 21 service in north Greenfield (north of the Mohawk Trail).	High	Medium	Medium	N/A
18	Adjust Route 32 to reduce overlapping service with MART's Athol/Orange Shuttle.	Low	Low	Low	Coordination
19	Expand evening service on weekdays to at least 9:00 PM.	Core	High	Medium	N/A
20	Use FRTA Access program to	High	High	Medium	Additional

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Complexity	Impact	Also in Category...
	test ridership demand in areas currently not served by regular fixed route service.				Studies
21	Expand FRTA Access program to rural communities not served by a COA or FTM. This could include expanding the service area in Hilltown communities through the Hilltown CDC or in southern communities through the Town of Southwick using Ecolane software.	High	High	Medium	Additional Studies; Coordination

N/A = Not Applicable

8.4.2 Capital Recommendations

Current and upcoming capital needs center on procuring software solutions to more efficiently deliver service, particularly demand response service (Table 33). FRTA also aims to improve the passenger experience through its ongoing bus stop infrastructure upgrades program.

Table 33. Capital Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Complexity	Impact	Also in Category...
3	Improve the passenger experience through bus stop infrastructure enhancements (seating, shelters) deployed at high ridership locations and bicycle infrastructure (parking and vehicle racks).	Medium / High	High	High	N/A
4	Leverage technology solutions to more efficiently schedule demand response trips to increase capacity of the existing fleet. Coordinate with COAs to ensure participation in software usage.	Medium / High	Low	Medium	Data and Performance
5	Explore potential software solutions that could help riders plan trips via the fixed route system, rather than scheduling demand response trips.	High	High	High	Data and Performance
6	Continue to expand the FRTA fleet as funding allows to meet	Core	High	Medium	N/A

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Complexity	Impact	Also in Category...
	service needs.				

N/A = Not Applicable

8.4.3 Data and Performance Recommendations

FRTA plans to prioritize expanding its data analysis practices in the next five years to better evaluate performance and more proactively plan based on ridership (Table 34). These efforts will also support strategic deployment of existing resources and identify potential gaps or needs.

Table 34. Data and Performance Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Complexity	Impact	Also in Category...
5	Explore potential software solutions that could help riders plan trips via the fixed route system, rather than scheduling paratransit trips.	High	High	High	Capital
12	Add Information Technology and data analysis staff positions. Evaluate projected ridership demand to model scenarios to more proactively plan for service expansion.	High	High	Medium	N/A
8	Continue to coordinate with regional stakeholders such as COAs and GCC to understand ongoing needs and priorities. Monitor ridership data to quantify demand and improve performance.	Core	Low	Medium	Coordination

N/A = Not Applicable

8.4.4 Policy Recommendations

FRTA created a formal no-show policy for demand response service since the 2020 CRTP and intends to build on this effort by documenting additional procedures (Table 35).

Table 35. Policy Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Complexity	Impact	Also in Category...
13	Consistently enforce formal no-show policy for demand response service.	Core	Low	Medium	N/A
14	Develop, document, and update internal policies and procedures including service standards and internal training manuals for contracted operations staff including	Core	Medium	Medium	N/A

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Complexity	Impact	Also in Category...
	drivers, maintenance, and facilities staff. Document and define service standards to guide service changes and capital investment including defining high performing routes, high ridership stop locations, and service type.				

N/A = Not Applicable

8.4.5 Coordination Recommendations

Several of the recommendations in this plan deal with coordination with neighboring RTAs, as well as ongoing coordination with member communities and institutions within the FRTA service area (Table 36). This coordination can lead to streamlined procurement opportunities, partnerships for expanded service, and more seamless customer experiences.

Table 36. Coordination Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Complexity	Impact	Also in Category...
2	Assess service providers within the FRTA service area to identify areas of overlapping service and service gaps. Collaborate with FRCOG as part of the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Planning process to map the service areas of providers operating within the FRTA service area.	Medium/ High	Low	Medium	Additional Studies
7	Coordinate with neighboring RTAs such as BRTA, MART, and PVTA to facilitate transfers between systems for passengers.	Core	Medium	Medium	N/A
8	Continue to coordinate with regional stakeholders such as COAs and GCC to understand ongoing needs and priorities. Monitor ridership data to quantify demand and improve performance.	Core	Low	Medium	Data and Performance
18	Adjust Route 32 to reduce overlapping service with MART's Athol/Orange Shuttle.	Low	Low	Low	Service
21	Expand the FRTA Access program to rural communities not served by a COA or FTM. This could include expanding the service area in	High	High	Medium	Additional Studies; Service

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Complexity	Impact	Also in Category...
	Hilltown communities through the Hilltown CDC or in southern communities through the Town of Southwick using Ecolane software.				

N/A = Not Applicable

8.4.6 Recommendations for Additional Studies

Several opportunities for additional studies were identified as part of the planning process for this CRTP (Table 37). These studies have service and coordination implications, such as partnering with the regional planning organization housed in the same building as FRTA or coordination with member municipalities.

Table 37. Recommendations for Additional Studies

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Complexity	Impact	Also in Category...
1	Expand access to shopping, especially grocery stores (such as by adding an additional weekend trip to Big Y on Route 41).	Medium / High	High	High	Service
2	Assess service providers within the FRTA service area to identify areas of overlapping service and service gaps. Collaborate with FRCOG as part of the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Planning process to map service areas of providers operating within the FRTA service area.	Medium / High	Low	Medium	Coordination
20	Use FRTA Access microtransit service to test ridership demand in areas currently not served by regular fixed route service.	High	High	Medium	Service
21	Expand the FRTA Access program to rural communities not served by a COA or FTM. This could include expanding the service area in Hilltown communities through the Hilltown CDC or in southern communities through the Town of Southwick using Ecolane software.	High	High	Medium	Service; Coordination

8.4.7 Other Recommendations

Maintaining a sufficient workforce is a key priority for FRTA. Recommendations included here provide guidance on building the volunteer driver pool as well as adding and retaining bus operators (Table 38).

Table 38. Other Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Complexity	Impact	Also in Category...
9	Conduct public outreach to determine whether there are any major destinations not being served by the existing system that may be impacting ridership.	Low	Low	Low	N/A
10	Expand volunteer driver pool through publishing advertisements in local publications and social media, outreach to local organizations (chambers of commerce, civic groups, faith-based organizations), and advertising at public events.	Core	Medium	Low	N/A
11	Explore driver recruitment tools such as hosting a single-day hiring event, streamlining/shortening the hiring process, hosting regular "drop-in" interview slots and finding ways to expedite testing. Create materials that summarize benefits for operators (i.e., comparing health care costs or retirement benefits to private sector benchmarks) and "Why I Drive" operator testimonials. Solicit feedback from current operators on ways to attract new drivers and retain existing drivers.	Core	Medium	Low	N/A
22	Develop a marketing plan for the FRTA to build awareness and support for service and increase ridership.	Core	Low	Medium	N/A

N/A = Not Applicable

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Appendix A Fares

Fare policy is part of a broader set of RTA and Commonwealth policies that support public access to transit, RTA revenue, transit system operations, and many other facets of transit service in Massachusetts.

This appendix explores current fare collection policies for FRTA and fare replacement programs funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It also examines the industry's best practices for fare-free transit operations and provides an outlook for the future of fare collection.

Fare Collection and Revenue Replacement Program

FRTA's fixed route and ADA services have been fare-free since March 2020 and demand response fares have been suspended since November 2024. FRTA charges fares for its microtransit transportation. Fares vary from $3 to $4 depending on which zone passengers travel to and from.

Fare-free Regional Transit – Statewide Background

The following subsections explain the evolution of fare collection/revenue replacement—from fare suspension during the COVID-19 pandemic, to the Commonwealth's Try Transit Program and the funding for operations provided by the Fair Share Amendment.

COVID-19 Fare Suspension

In March 2020 the Commonwealth, along with the rest of the United States, was grappling with a global pandemic. To slow the spread of COVID-19, measures were put in place to encourage social distancing and minimize contact between front line service workers and the public. RTAs responded by suspending fare collection as part of their COVID-19 mitigation measures. Fare suspension durations varied across the Commonwealth, and many RTAs reinstated fare collection once protective measures were in place to protect bus operators from exposure to COVID-19, though the FRTA did not.

Try Transit Program

Beginning on November 25, 2022, and through the end of December 2022, FRTA received $15,000 to suspend fare collection. The fare suspension was funded by a $2.5 million appropriation available to RTAs in the FY 2023 Massachusetts State Budget and restricted to fare-free operations. This was the first program funded with an appropriation in the state budget. The limited duration of the program makes it challenging to measure changes in ridership trends. However, anecdotally, it was popular among riders.

Fare-free funding was extended to RTAs again in the FY 2024 Massachusetts State Budget with a $15 million appropriation restricted to fare suspension programs. The funding allowed for longer duration fare suspension but remained a pilot program since it provided funds for a partial fiscal year. FRTA received $18,463 and suspended fares from November 20, 2023, through December 31, 2023.

On balance, RTA customers, staff, and stakeholders across the Commonwealth considered the FY 2024 program successful and funding was again appropriated in the FY 2025 State Budget with $30 million. FRTA received a grant of $218,173 to support fare-free operation from November 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025.

Fair Share Act

In November 2022, voters approved an amendment to the Massachusetts Constitution that assesses a 4 percent surtax on incomes over $1 million that would be restricted to education and transportation. The Commonwealth began tax collection on January 1, 2023, and used the revenue collected during the remainder of the FY 2023 budget year to create a trust fund from which funds would be distributed in future years.

The FY 2024 budget was the first year funds were appropriated, and $1 billion was included in the budget; $510 million was appropriated to support education and $490 million was appropriated to support transportation. As a portion of the transportation funds, the RTAs were appropriated $25 million, and $15 million was used to support the FY 2024 Try Transit program. For FY 2025, the Fair Share Amendment was expected to generate $1.3 billion, $605 of which was appropriated to transportation. In FY 2025, the RTA share increased to $90 million; $30 million was used to support the FY 2025 Try Transit program.

State Fiscal Year 2026 Fare-Free Budget and Legislation

The FY 2026 budget for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was signed into law on July 4, 2025. In FY 2026, $35 million was appropriated for the implementation of year-round fare-free transit service across the Commonwealth's RTAs. This funding accompanies a statutory amendment to Chapter 161B of Massachusetts General Laws, which now allows RTAs to suspend fares for all fixed route services and paratransit services, subject to appropriation of funding to replace fare revenue. MassDOT is responsible for providing RTAs with fare revenue attributable to the fare-free service mandate. FRTA is required to collect and report ridership data to MassDOT in a format and frequency prescribed by MassDOT.

FRTA Fare Policy

As of May 2025 FRTA has permanently suspended fares on fixed route service.

Fare Rates

Prior to fare-free service, FRTA charged the rates in Table 39 for fares.

Table 39. Fixed Route Fare Policy

Fare Product	Fare Price
Fixed Route Regular	$1.50
Fixed Route Reduced (for Older adults age 60+ or for Disabled and/or Medicare Card Holders)	$0.75
Fixed Route Child 6-12	$0.75
Fixed Route Child (under 6 Years Old with an Adult)	FREE
Unlimited Rides for 31 Days Regular	$40.00
Unlimited Rides for 31 Days Reduced	$20.00
Transfer at JWO Transit Center, Avenue A and 3rd Street, Avenue A and Hubies Tavern, Avenue A and Shea Theater	FREE
Transfer between FRTA and MART at Hannaford Supermarket	FREE

Source: FRTA Fare Policy, May 2023

Table 40. ADA, Demand Response, and Microtransit Fare Policy

Fare Product	Fare Price
ADA Complementary Paratransit	$3.00
Demand Response (Fare Group 1)	
One-way trip within same town	$1.75
One-way trip to adjacent town	$2.25
One-way trip beyond adjacent town	$2.75
Senior Center within town	$1.00
Senior Center in adjacent town	$1.25
Senior Center beyond adjacent town	$1.50
Demand Response (Fare Group 2)	
One-way trip within same town	$1.25
One-way trip to adjacent town	$1.75
One-way trip beyond adjacent town	$2.25
Senior Center within town	$0.75
Senior Center in adjacent town	$1.00
Senior Center beyond adjacent town	$1.25
FRTA Access Microtransit	
Microtransit trip within zone for first rider	$3.00
Microtransit trip within zone for each additional rider	$1.50
Microtransit trip between zone for first rider	$4.00
Microtransit trip between zone for each additional rider	$2.00

Source: FRTA Fare Policy, August 2025
Note: ADA paratransit and demand response services are currently fare free; however, FRTA continues to charge fares for FRTA Access Microtransit service.

Fare-free Program

- FY 2023 – Try Transit holiday promotion: $15,000
- FY 2024 – Fare-free Implementation: $18,463
- FY 2025 – Fare-free Implementation: $218,173

RTA Fare-Free Experience and Lessons

FRTA noted several noticeable improvements following implementation of fare-free service. Ridership increased for fare-free services such as fixed route and demand response. Ridership also recovered more rapidly from the pandemic drop in ridership than anticipated. Passenger satisfaction has also increased. Additionally, conflicts between passengers and operators have

decreased as a result of fare-free service. FRTA has also experienced operational benefits such as improvements to on-time performance and a reduction in road calls.

Fare Collection Infrastructure

Fare collection equipment serves two main purposes: (1) collect, count, and securely store money deposited by riders upon boarding and (2) count passenger boardings. The amendment to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 161B in the FY 2026 state budget, which mandates fare-free service, changes considerations around the maintenance and use of fare collection equipment today and in the future.

Absent the need to collect fares, the equipment can be used to count passenger boardings. Passenger counting is a secondary function of fare equipment, and while a historically reliable method to count boardings, technology is widely available to provide more detailed passenger boarding information. FRTA has since removed farebox equipment from fixed route buses and operators take manual passenger counts with clickers.

On-board Equipment and Ticket Vending Machines

FRTA previously used SPX Genfare fareboxes for fixed route and demand response services. FRTA procured 18 Genfare fareboxes in 2010 and upgraded its equipment in 2015. FRTA's ticket vending machine (TVM) was also procured in 2015. Fareboxes accepted cash (coins and bills up to $20), fare cards, and GO-CARDs. GO-CARDs were introduced by FRTA in 2018 as a reusable, reloadable smart card.

In May 2025, the FRTA Advisory Board voted to permanently adopt fare-free service. This decision was in response to an internal study conducted to establish the relative cost-benefit ratio of collecting fares, whereby FRTA found that the associated costs were greater than the fare revenue collected. As a result, the TVM located at the JWO Transit Center are currently out of service and not in use.

FRTA's Access microtransit program still collects passenger fares. Access passengers can pay cash fares using exact change or through an electronic fare account.

FRTA does not maintain or use farebox equipment for passenger counting. Following the Advisory Board's decision, electronic fareboxes were removed from fixed route buses. Prior to removal, FRTA was responsible for an annual maintenance cost of $8,500 through an ongoing contract with Genfare. FRTA purchased an additional $39,700 worth of parts and inventory for any on-site farebox or TVM repairs.

FRTA is in the process of improving its APC system's reliability, though operators continue to use manual clicker counters for passenger counts. As fare-free service is anticipated to be permanent for fixed route service, FRTA has no plans for capital replacement of farebox equipment.

Retail Sales

Prior to fare-free service, passengers could purchase one-way fares and stored-value cards at the JWO Transit Center using the TVM located in the lobby or in-person at the Transit Office.

Fare cards, paper media with magnetic stripes, were available for purchase in $1.50 increments. GO-CARDs, the reusable smart cards, were also sold at the JWO Transit Center. There were no initial purchase fees for obtaining a GO-CARD and any amount (in $5 increments) could be loaded onto a GO-CARD to pay for fares. GO-CARD balances could not be viewed online but could be checked using the TVM or bus fareboxes.

At the JWO Transit Center, fare cards and GO-CARDs could be paid for with cash, personal check with photo identification, or debit/credit card (Visa and MasterCard). Passengers could also add funds to their account via credit card transaction over the phone. FRTA is exploring different options to allow passengers to view and manage their accounts to add funds online.

FRTA has not had staff dedicated to retail transactions, even prior to fare-free service. Passengers purchasing fares in-person (for microtransit service) conduct transactions with staff whose primary responsibilities include trip scheduling and customer service.

Cash Control and Management

As noted above, FRTA documented the costs of fare collection before deciding to suspend fares permanently. FRTA estimated that fare collection cost an estimated $181,200 per year (in 2023). This included staff time for:

- Troubleshooting and repairing equipment ($9,750 per year)
- Collecting, counting, and reporting fares collected ($32,500 per year)
- Fare related issues and complaint handling ($48,750 per year)
- Creation of reduced fare identification badges ($6,500 per year)

Other fare collection costs included the fare counting room, based on square foot. FRTA estimated the cost of this fare room at $40,000. Security cameras contributed an additional $1,800. Costs for tickets and smart cards contributed an additional $65,100 to equipment and material costs.

In 2019, pre-pandemic, FRTA collected approximately $130,000 in fares on fixed route service and $22,000 in fares for demand response. Approximately 117 percent of fares were thus lost to process and materials.

Fare-free Transit Best Practices

Agencies across the country have experimented with fare-free transit. This subsection details best practices for implementing a fare-free system.

Transit Access and Efficiency

Fare-free transit often increases access and efficiency.

Ridership

Fare-free transit almost always is associated with a significant increase in ridership. Fare-free transit has repeatedly shown to increase ridership by 20 to 60 percent for transit agencies in the United States. Agencies that went fully fare-free before the COVID-19 pandemic experienced 20 to 100 percent increases in ridership within the first two years of the policy change. Paratransit services have seen similar growth, with increases up to 60 percent after implementation of fare-free service. Studies suggest that 5 to 30 percent of new trips resulting from fare-free policy come from those who previously took other motorized modes of travel (Volinski 2012). FRTA total ridership for FY 2019 (pre-COVID) was 157,596. Total ridership for FY 2020 was 112,745, and for FY 2024 ridership grew to 169,225.

Operational Efficiency

Fare-free transit simplifies both the ride experience for passengers and the workload of operators. Without fare collection, dwell time per passenger during boarding and alighting is reduced without the queues at the farebox; it also enables more efficient all-door boarding.

Shorter dwell time improves on-time performance and service reliability. Fare-free transit has been acknowledged to have significantly improved on-time performance at RTAs in Massachusetts (Baxandall 2025).

Free fares may encourage more frequent shorter rides by passengers who may have otherwise walked. Despite the reduced dwell time per passenger resulting from elimination of farebox queues, more stops and larger boarding and alighting volumes may negatively impact absolute dwell time. This is most acute where stops are located in close proximity to each other and can be mitigated with increased spacing that balances operational efficiency with passenger access.

Financial Health

If not collecting fares, agencies must replace lost revenue; this is balanced against the fact that it costs agencies money to collect fares in the first place.

Revenue Sources

Identifying and acquiring alternative revenue sources to replace fare revenue is a significant barrier to implementing and maintaining fare-free transit. Securing a funding source for Massachusetts RTAs is important to the maintenance of fare-free transit. Small to mid-sized agencies, like Massachusetts' RTAs, where fare revenue is a small portion of operating revenue, face less financial difficulty in implementing and maintaining fare-free transit.

Revenue Collection Costs

The loss of revenue by eliminating fare collection is a concern for RTAs. However, fare-free transit also provides an opportunity for cost savings. Fare-free transit eliminates costs associated with the administration, enforcement, and equipment maintenance of fare collection. Fare administration, collection, and enforcement has been documented as consuming over 25 percent of fare revenue at Massachusetts RTAs (Worcester Regional Research Bureau 2019).

Increased ridership resulting from fare-free transit often creates the need for increased capacity. RTAs may need to act to effectively handle the increased demand, such as expanding fleets, hiring more staff, or expanding service. Agencies should anticipate or acknowledge the potential for higher costs associated with providing higher capacity service to accommodate increased ridership.

A bigger challenge for FRTA may be the complementary paratransit service provided for older adults and people with disabilities. Paratransit services do not scale the same as fixed route services. The personalized nature of the service means that as more riders book more trips, both vehicle and staff productivity tends to fall and capacity to provide trips becomes strained. Funding is needed to not only replace revenue lost to fare suspension but also provide resources to hire and train additional staff needed to meet the growing demand for paratransit service.

Operator and Passenger Experience

Farebox disputes are the most likely incident that results in transit operator assaults. FTA reports operator assaults per unlinked passenger have increased fourfold from 2009 to 2020 (Van Eyken 2022). Fare-free transit programs improve operator safety by eliminating conflict over fare collection and have generally received positive feedback from operators. Many prominent transit organizations are in support of fare-free transit for its positive implications towards ensuring operation safety. Fare-free transit also reduces barriers to operator

recruitment by reducing the need of operators to hold technical knowledge regarding farebox technologies (Transit Workforce Center 2022).

Fare-free transit can increase the number of non-destination riders (i.e., people who use the transit system for shelter or as a pastime). Fare-free transit is an attractive option for someone without shelter to find respite from weather. Because transit is a public service, it is a challenge to provide equitable access for all members of the community while discouraging non-destination riding that may be disruptive to other passengers.

Riding policies, like having all passengers exit the bus at the end of the line, can dissuade non-destination riding. Agencies can collaborate with social service providers to extend outreach and intervention opportunities (GoTriangle 2025). Loitering rules can be better enforced at terminals and bus stops, and rules of conduct can be imposed and enforced when customers act unruly or disturb other passengers on board.

Future of Fare-free Regional Transit

Funding fare free transit in the future comes with both risks and opportunities.

Risks

Risks that go along with funding fare free transit include the uncertainty of continued state funding and the provision of fare collection equipment should fare collection resume.

State Funding

Starting in the FY 2024 state budget, fare-free service was funded with a discretionary grant program appropriated annually and funded with Fair Share Amendment revenue. The FY 2026 state budget amended Massachusetts General Law Chapter 161B with a mandate for fare-free transit service. The transition from a discretionary program to a statutory funding requirement provides a greater degree of certainty to FRTA that the funds will be available each year; however, "subject to appropriation" in the amendment suggests that the funding could be at risk from prolonged budgetary constraints.

Opportunities

Opportunities for revenue enhancements to replace farebox collections are limited. High ridership may make advertising space inside the bus, at terminals, and stops more attractive as it is visible to more people. Additional vehicles in service to meet the demands of high ridership may present more opportunities for vehicle exterior advertising space.

Future of Fare-Free Policy

With the passage of the FY 2026 state budget and the changes to Chapter 161B, there is increased certainty in the state policy environment with regard to fare-free regional transit. RTAs around the Commonwealth may choose to make policy and operational decisions that assume future funding replacement for fare revenue.

Appendix B Environmental Policy

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has set ambitious statewide goals regarding environmental quality, as have many of its regions and municipalities. With transportation emissions contributing significantly to statewide greenhouse gas emissions and poor air quality, efforts to reduce those emissions through technology or encouraging transit ridership are described in this appendix. This appendix highlights how those environmental policies or programs may intersect with, inform, or drive FRTA actions.

Overview of Environmental Policies that May Intersect with Regional Transit Authority Activities

The following sections identify RTA activities and the associated supportive policies:

- Commonwealth policies are statewide policies or goals that support specific RTA activities.
- Regional policies are any climate action plans established by Regional Planning Agencies if those plans include transportation goals, targets, or actions.
- Local policies included here are any municipal climate action plans with transportation goals. Separate transportation-specific plans are not included. Comprehensive plans are included if there is a strong and specific reference to climate change actions and no separate climate plan for the city. Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans, Net Zero Action Plans, and other plans that feature climate action are included.

RTA-specific goals and studies are another important source of information supporting specific RTA actions regarding environmental quality. Together, the statewide, regional, and local policy context should help to inform decision making and goals contained within the five-year RTA plan.

Foundational Commonwealth Environmental Policies

There are several foundational Commonwealth policies that set the stage for greenhouse gas emissions reductions from the transportation sector. These policies may support numerous RTA activities as they relate to greenhouse gas emissions reductions, given the alignment between emissions reductions and maximizing transit ridership, serving transit-oriented places, and installing green energy infrastructure.

- Global Warming Solutions Act: Signed into law in August 2008, this act required the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to set economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals, including for transportation, that achieve a 10 to 25 percent reduction below statewide 1990 levels by 2020 and at least 80 percent reduction below statewide 1990 levels by 2050 (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2008b).
- Commission of the Future of Transportation in the Commonwealth: Established by EO 579 (Baker 2018), this commission developed multiple recommendations related to reducing GHG emissions and promoting energy efficiency (Governor's Press Office 2018).
- 2050 Decarbonization Roadmap: Published in December 2020, the Roadmap is a result of a Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs planning process to identify cost-effective and equitable strategies for Massachusetts

to reach its goal of 85 percent greenhouse gas emissions reductions by 2050 and achieving net zero emissions (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2020).

- Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2050: Released in 2022, this plan represents Commonwealth policies and strategies to reach Net Zero in 2050 (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2022).
- Green Communities Act: Signed in 2008, this act expanded energy efficiency, supported the development of renewable energy resources, created a greener state building code, and created the green communities program (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2008a).
- Beyond Mobility: The statewide long-range transportation plan, published in 2024, lays out a number of actions to be undertaken by MassDOT, several of which focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2024a).

Maximizing Transit Ridership

Efforts by the Commonwealth as well as regionally have sought to maximize transit ridership.

Commonwealth Efforts

A key method of reducing environmental impact of the transportation sector is increasing ridership on transit, particularly if it shifts people from single-occupancy vehicles into a comparatively efficient transit bus. There have been multiple efforts undertaken at the statewide level to increase RTA ridership:

- Funding for Fare-Free Service: After a $15 million pilot for fare-free RTA transit in FY 2024, Massachusetts approved funding in its FY 2025 budget granting $30 million to 13 RTAs to provide year-round, fare free service (MassDOT 2024a).
- Coordination of Service Providers: MassDOT provides a toolkit on coordinating service providers to maximize mobility, increase ridership, and serve riders more efficiently. The toolkit includes case studies, ways to get involved, and Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plans developed by Regional Planning Agencies (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2025d).
- Mobility Management: MassMobility is a MassDOT initiative which aims to increase mobility for those who lack transportation access, including older adults, people with disabilities, veterans, and low-income commuters (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2025e).
- Regional Transit Innovation Grant: MassDOT has provided grants that provide funding to transit providers for innovative projects. Eligible projects enhance or expand existing service, provide innovative transit service, improve connectivity of rural areas and between regional transit service areas, or support electrification (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2024b).
- 310 CMR 60.05, Global Warming Solutions Act Requirements for Transportation: Includes requirements that support maximizing transit ridership and may be an effective tool for RTAs who are working to increase ridership in communities that they serve.

Regional Efforts

The following regional policies are supportive of maximizing transit ridership.

- Franklin Regional Council of Governments/*Sustainable Franklin County:* Provide travel alternatives like public transit and additional park and rides (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2013).

Serving Transit-Oriented and Transit-Dependent Places

Both the Commonwealth and local governments have created policies geared towards serving transit-oriented and dependent places.

Commonwealth Efforts

There are several statewide initiatives to support the development of transit-oriented places and to focus transit service on those places that are most dependent on public transportation.

- Massachusetts Chapter 40R, or The Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Act, Chapter 249 of the Acts of 2004: Encourages dense residential and mixed-use development through "smart growth" zoning districts. The goal is to increase housing supply by increasing the amount of land zoned for dense housing, including a high percentage of affordable housing units to be located near transit stations. Communities are eligible for Chapter 40R payments and other financial incentives upon state review and approval of a local overlay district (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2025b).
- Section 3A of Massachusetts General Law c.40A, also known as the MBTA Communities Law: The goal of this law is to create zoning that encourages the development of housing in areas served by MBTA rapid transit (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2025f). Given the overlap between RTA and MBTA rapid transit-served areas, as housing developments come to those areas targeted by the law, RTAs may consider enhancing complementary fixed route service depending on the context and need.

Regional and Local Efforts

The following regional and local policies are supportive of serving transit-oriented or transit-dependent places.

- Franklin Regional Council of Governments/*Sustainable Franklin County:* Guide housing closer to employment (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2013).
- Franklin Regional Council of Governments/*Regional Housing Plan*: Support efforts to update local zoning to allow for high density development (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2024).
- Town of Orange Housing Plan: Encourage redevelopment and infill downtown. Promote alternative forms of transportation in Orange (Town of Orange 2023).
- Town of Sunderland Housing Plan: Encourage development in areas with existing access to transit (Town of Sunderland 2022).
- Whatley Housing Production Plan: Encourage infill development along Route 5/10 along existing transit corridor (Town of Whately 2023).

Vehicle Emission Reductions

The Commonwealth and regional government have developed policies meant to reduce vehicle emissions.

Commonwealth Efforts

The Commonwealth has provided policy and funding support for the transition of public transportation vehicles to zero-emission forms of propulsion. This complements FRTA efforts to incorporate low- and zero-emission vehicles into their fleet.

- H.5060 An Act Driving Clean Energy and Offshore Wind, the Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2050: This act contains numerous transportation-related actions. This policy can be supportive of those efforts in that it calls for the MBTA bus fleet to be all electric by 2040; RTAs could potentially leverage that electrification effort to support procurement of their own electric vehicles. Additionally, it requires MassDOT to provide technical and funding assistance to RTAs to help electrify their fleets and to provide RTAs with assistance to create an electric bus rollout plan. MassDOT is also directed to consult with RTAs on developing and issuing recommendations for a program of incentives for authorities to develop and maintain buses and other zero emissions vehicles (Bill H.5060 2022). The directives to MassDOT could be a significant source of support for RTAs in this work.
- Beyond Mobility: This statewide plan contains a specific action to support electrification of public transportation vehicles, including FRTA vehicles (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2024a).

Regional Efforts

The following regional policies are supportive of electrification.

- Franklin County Regional Transportation Plan: Increase public charging infrastructure and support transition of municipal and transit fleets to electric vehicles (Franklin Regional Council of Governments 2023).

Supportive Local Efforts

Table 41 demonstrates where FRTA's transportation planning efforts may coordinate with or support existing plan and policy goals for respective communities within the FRTA planning area. For cities that do not have climate plans or whose climate plans do not contain transportation-related actions, the transportation planning work of FRTA may help to fill the gap.

While transportation actions varied across communities, general themes emerged around mobility, access, affordability, and greenhouse gas emissions reductions including electrification, and protecting transportation infrastructure (e.g., roads, bridges, culverts) from the effects of climate change to maintain continuity of operations and evacuation routes.

Table 41. Cities in Massachusetts with Climate Action Plan Transportation Goals

City Name	Climate Action Plan	Transportation Included (Y/N)
Greenfield	Sustainable Greenfield Master Plan Municipal Net Zero Operations Plan	Y

Challenges and Opportunities

FRTA has been exploring incorporating electric vehicles into the agency fleet. FRTA recently procured three paratransit electric vehicles and is looking to also procure an electric bus for fixed route service. Hatch, an engineering consulting firm, is conducting a study for FRTA, examining operational data and identifying routes or runs best suited for electric vehicle

deployment. FRTA's approach for fleet electrification is to test vehicles by putting them into service to understand critical factors such as battery degradation, energy usage, topography impacts, and any other operational challenges associated with electric vehicles.

FRTA is also currently in the design phase for the construction of a new roof-mounted solar project at the agency's maintenance and operations facility.

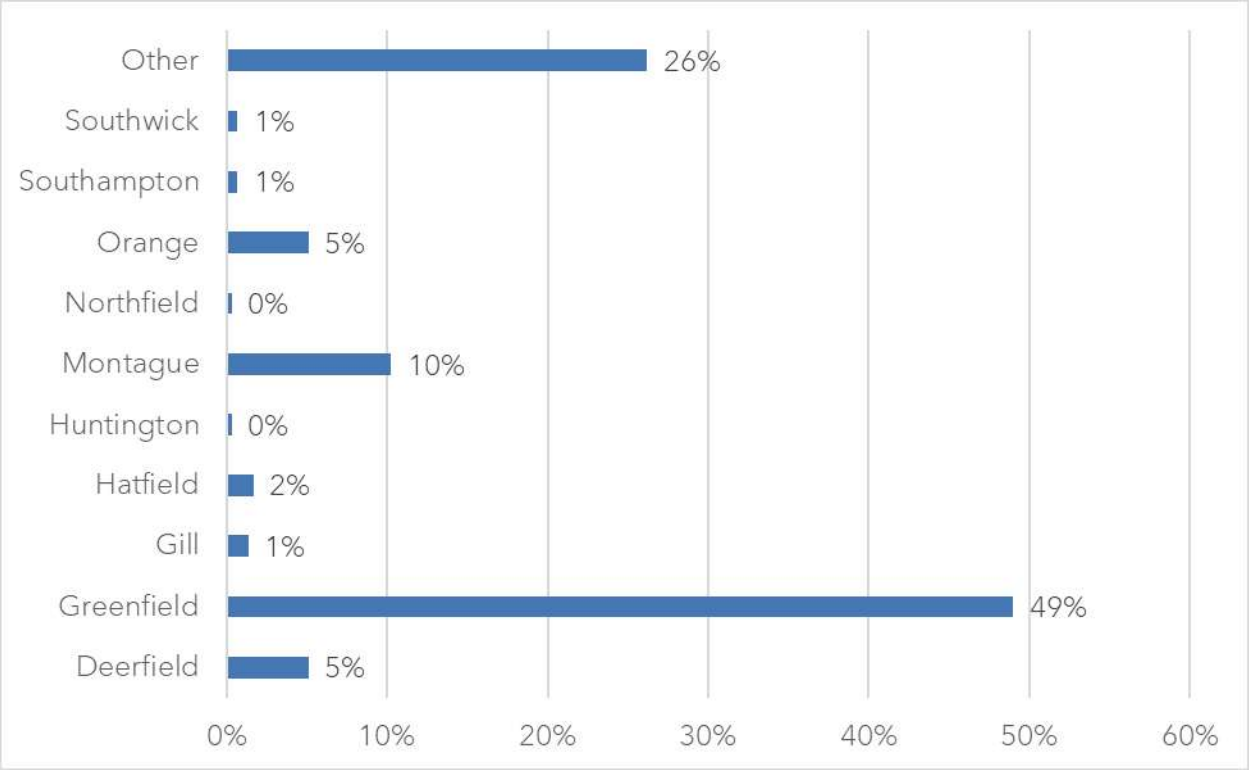
Appendix C Public Survey Results

This appendix provides complete survey results for the public survey. Some questions allowed participants to select multiple responses. As a result, percentages may not total to 100 percent for all questions.

Survey responses to what city or town respondents live in (Figure 42) reflected that 49 percent live in Greenfield, 26 percent responded other, and the rest are as follows:

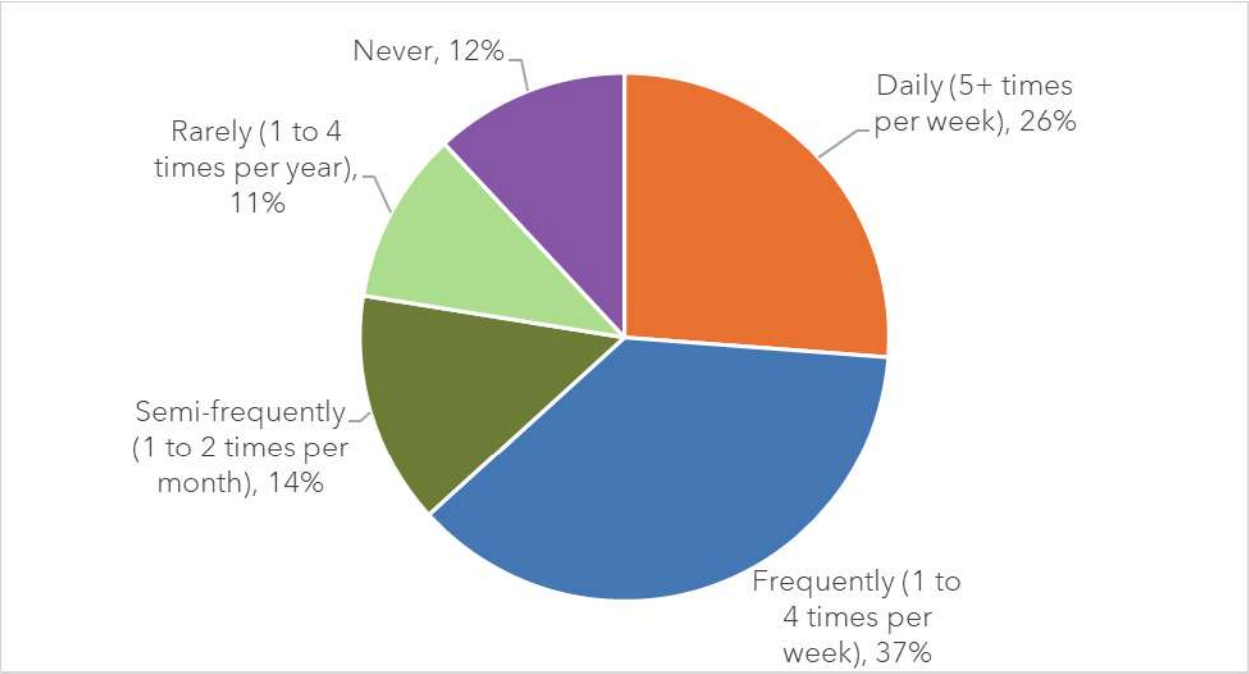
- Montague (10 percent)
- Orange (5 percent)
- Deerfield (5 percent)
- Hatfield (2 percent)
- Southwick (1 percent)
- Southampton (1 percent)
- Gill (1 percent)
- Northfield (0 percent)
- Huntington (0 percent)

Figure 42. What city or town do you live in?



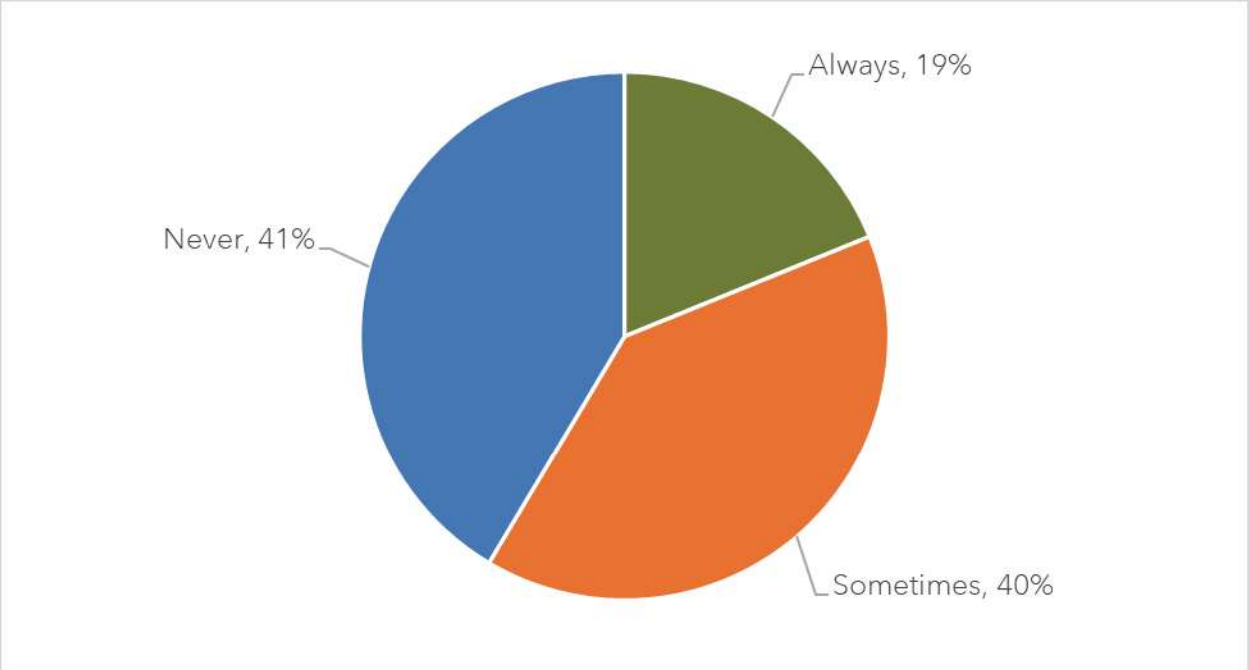
Survey responses to how often respondents ride FRTA (Figure 43) reflected that 37 percent of riders use FRTA frequently (one to four times per week), 26 percent use it daily, 14 percent use it semi-frequently, 11 percent use it rarely, and 12 percent never use FRTA.

Figure 43. How often do you ride FRTA?



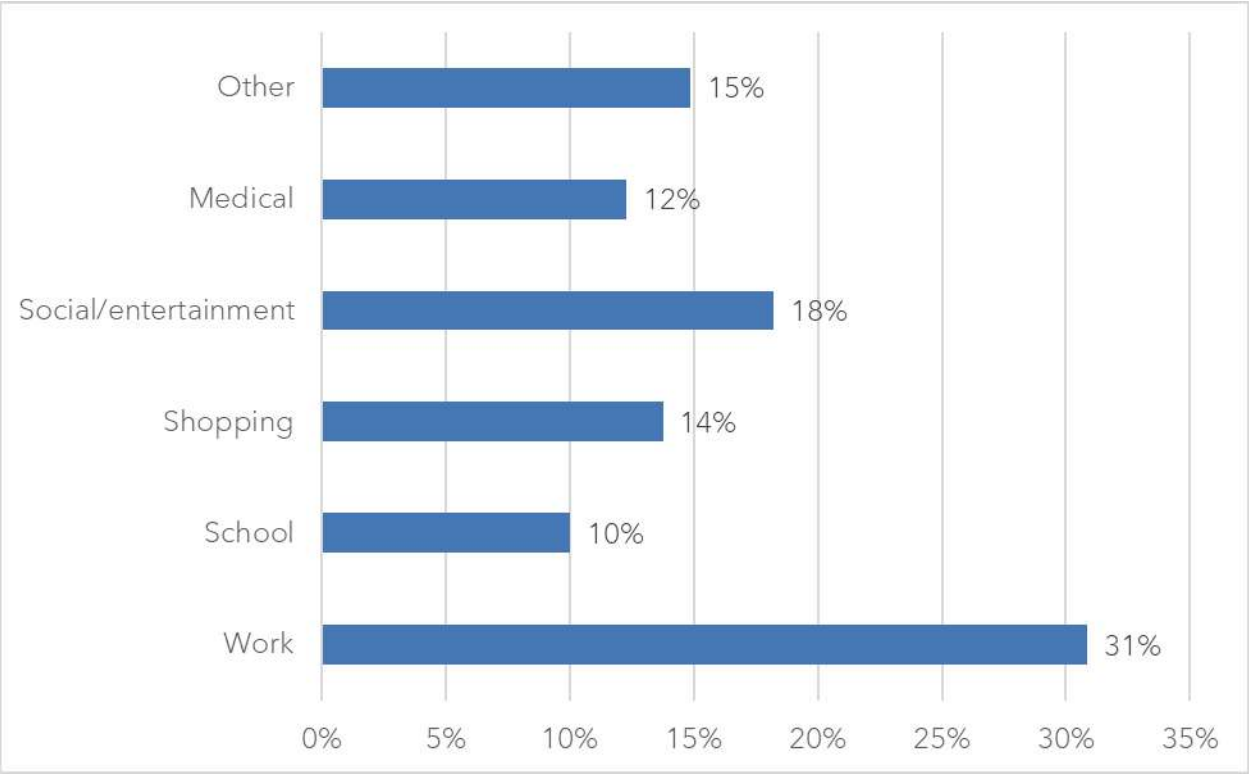
In regard to vehicle access, survey responses reflected that 41 percent of respondents never have access to a car, 40 percent sometimes have access, and 19 percent always have access (Figure 44).

Figure 44. Do you have access to a car?



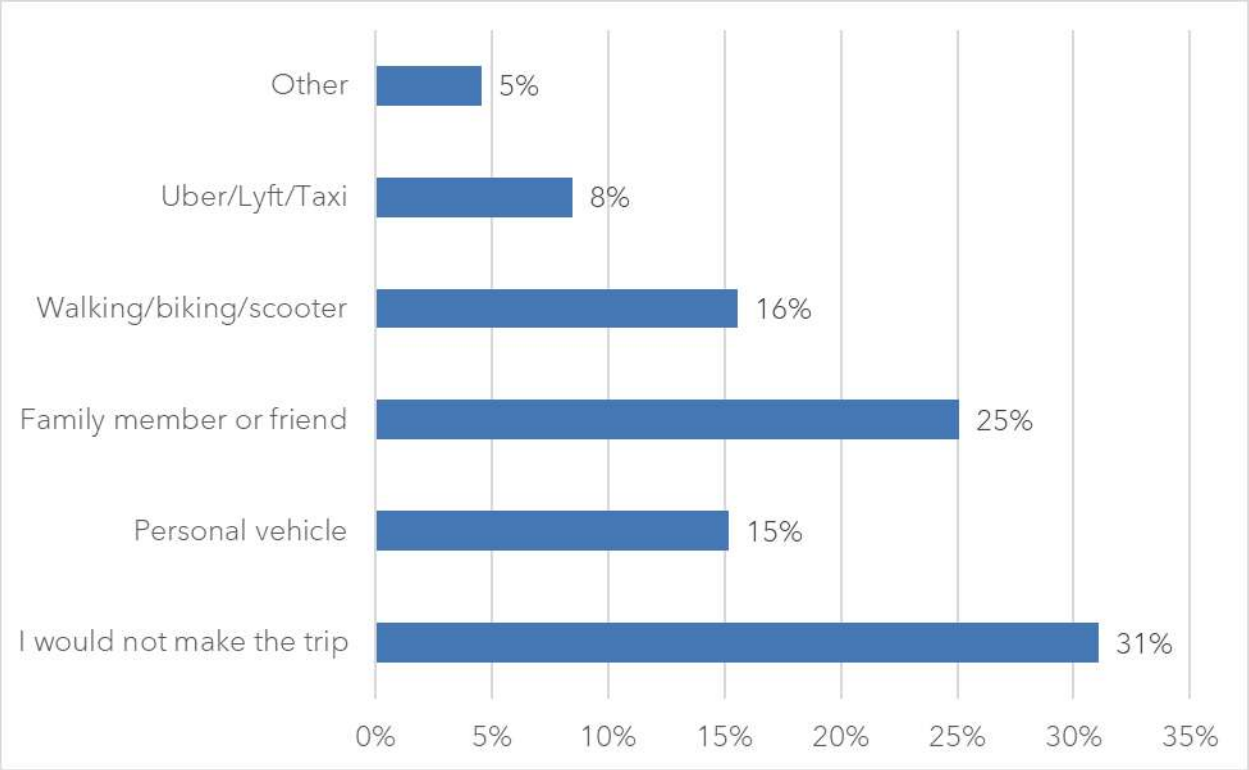
Survey responses to "what is the main purpose of your FRTA trips" (Figure 45) reflected that 31 percent of respondents use FRTA for work, 18 percent use it for social/entertainment, 14 percent use it for shopping, 12 percent use it for medical reasons, and 10 percent use it for school. Fifteen percent responded "other."

Figure 45. What is the main purpose of your FRTA trips?



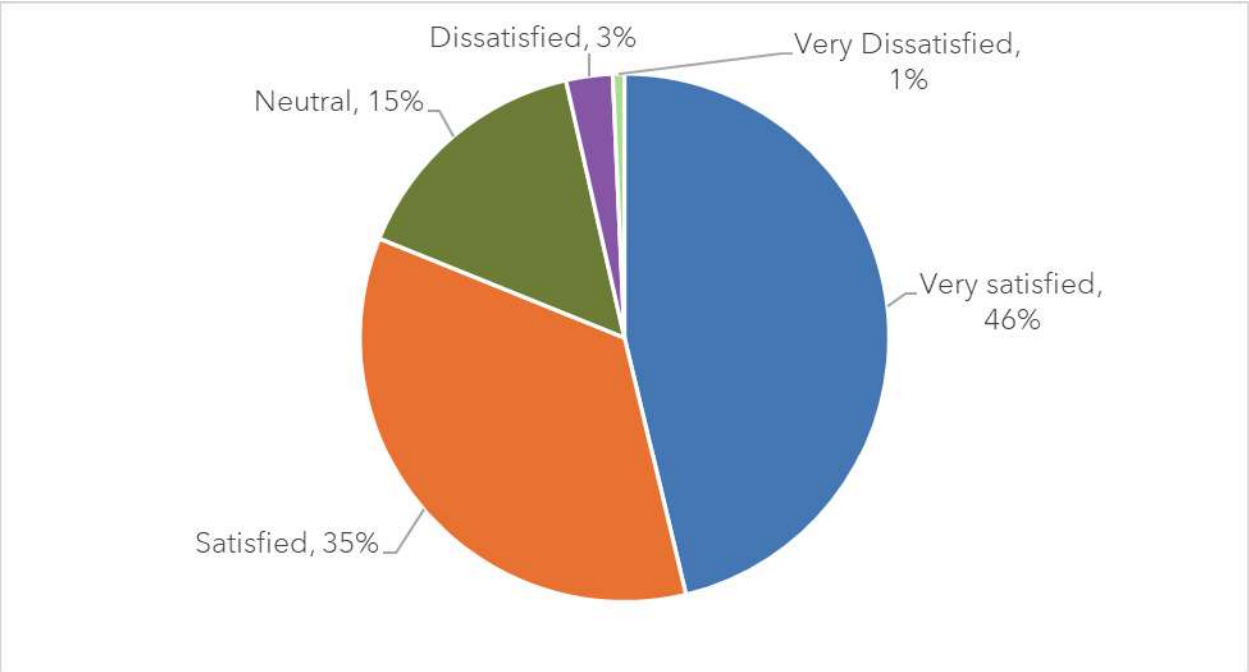
Survey responses for how respondents would make their trip if FRTA were not available (Figure 46) reflected that 31 percent would not make the trip; 25 percent would get a ride from a family member or friend; 16 percent would walk, bike, or use a scooter; 15 percent would use a personal vehicle; and 8 percent would take an Uber, Lyft, or taxi. Five percent responded "other."

Figure 46. How would you make your trip if FRTA were not available?



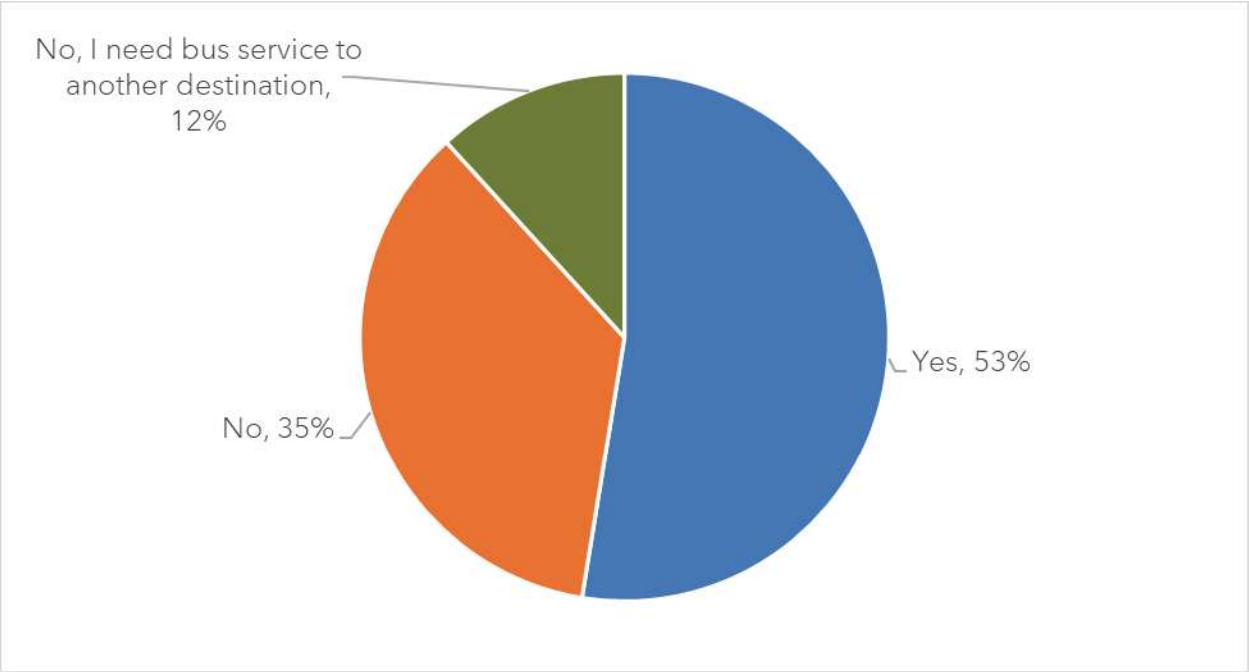
Survey responses about satisfaction with FRTA service (Figure 47) reflected that 46 percent of respondents were very satisfied with FRTA service, 35 percent were satisfied, 15 percent were neutral, 3 percent were dissatisfied, and 1 percent were very dissatisfied.

Figure 47. How satisfied are you generally with FRTA service?



Survey responses on satisfaction with FRTA's service hours, routes, and coverage (Figure 48) reflected that 53 percent of respondents are satisfied, 35 percent of respondents need more service earlier in the morning or later in the day, and 12 percent said they need bus service to another destination.

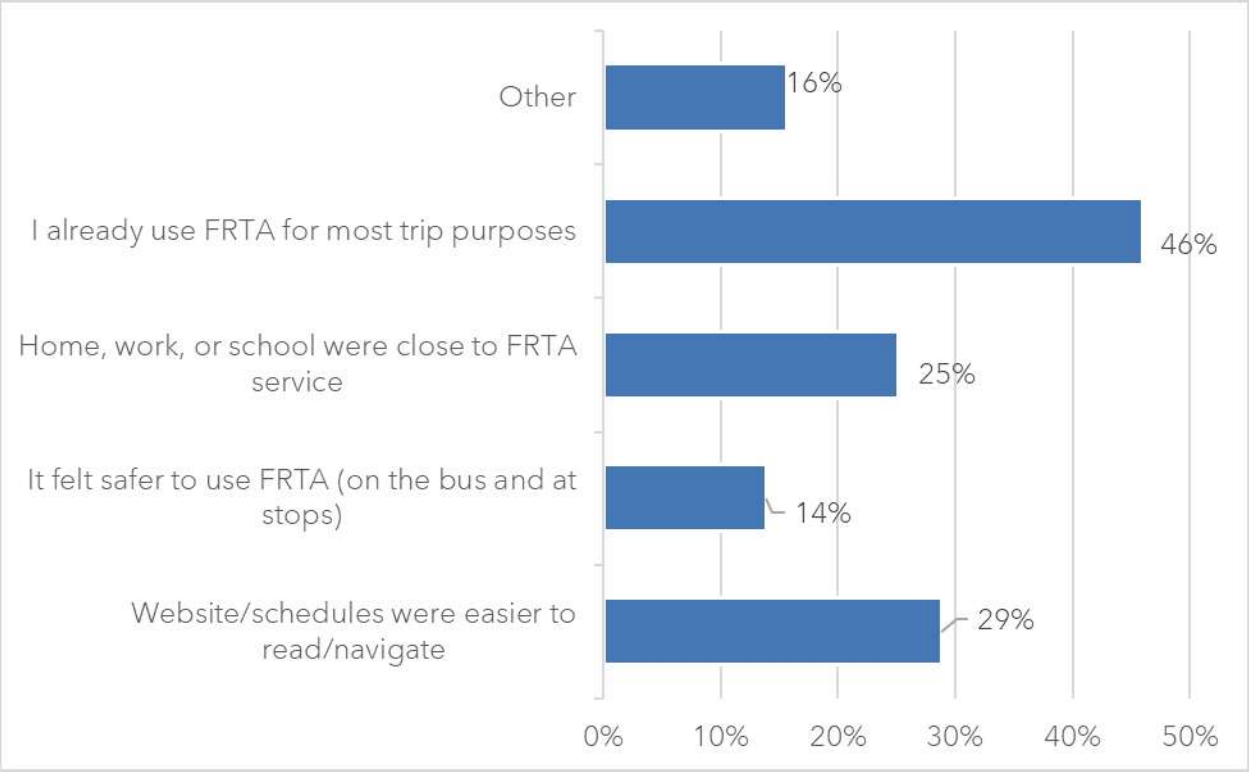
Figure 48. Are you satisfied with FRTA's service hours, routes, and geographic coverage?



Respondents were asked whether they would ride FRTA if the following were true (Figure 49), with the option to select multiple responses. The percentages represent the proportion of respondents who selected each statement.

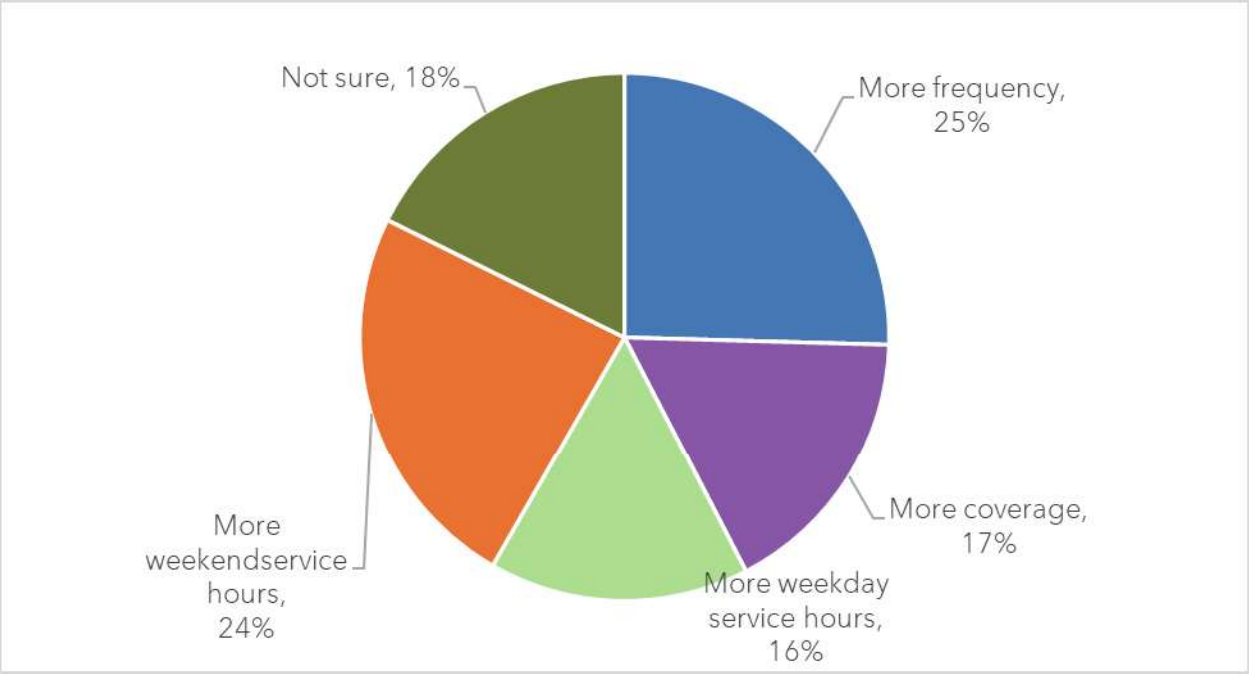
- It felt safer to use FRTA (on the bus and at stops) (14 percent)
- Home, work, or school were close to FRTA service (25 percent)
- Website schedules/were easier to read/navigate (29 percent)
- I already use FRTA for most trip purposes (46 percent)
- Other (16 percent)

Figure 49. Would you ride FRTA more if any of the following were true? (Select all that apply)



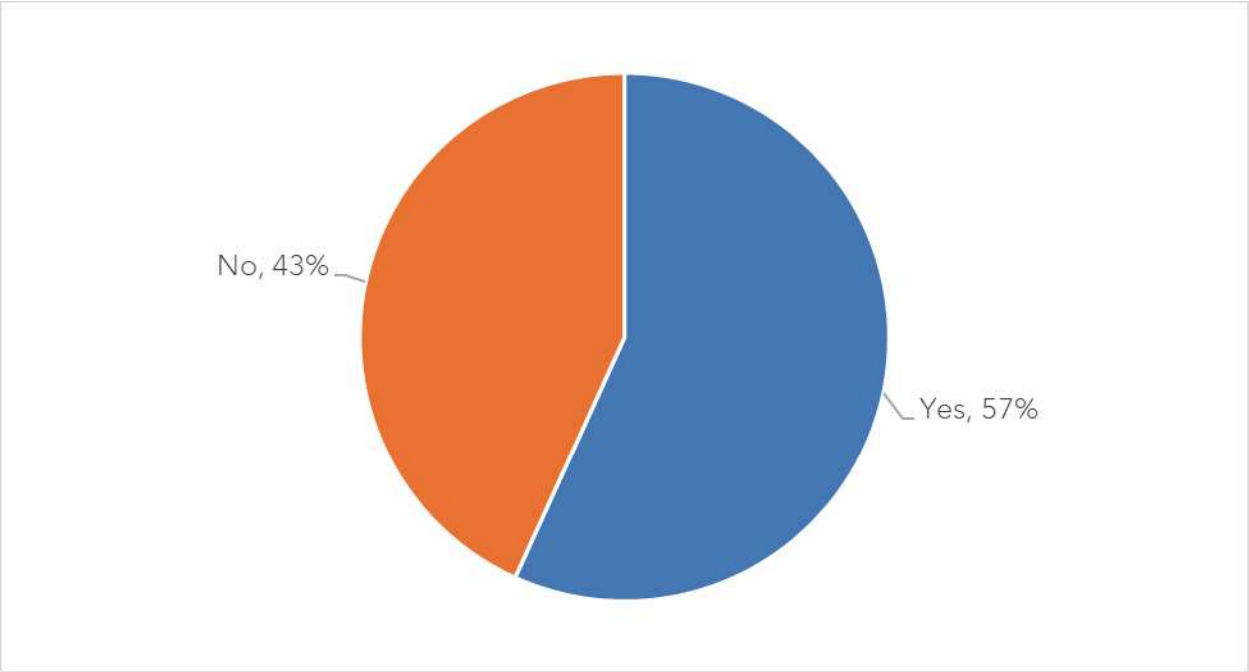
Survey responses for how FRTA should prioritize transit service (Figure 50) reflected that 25 percent of respondents would like more frequency, 24 percent would like more weekend service hours, 18 percent are not sure, 17 percent would like more coverage, and 16 percent would like more weekday service hours.

Figure 50. How should FRTA prioritize transit service? (Select one)



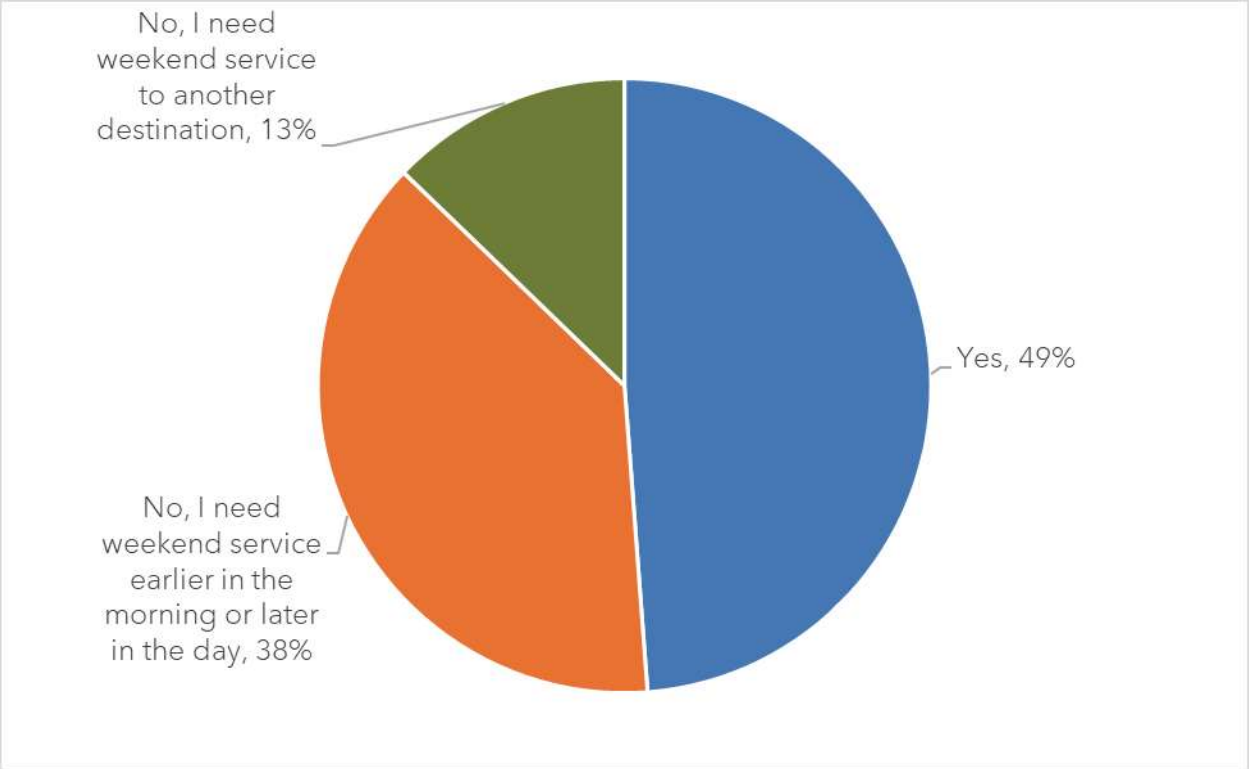
Survey responses for whether respondents use FRTA's new weekend service (Figure 51) reflected that 57 percent of users responded yes, and 43 percent responded no.

Figure 51. Do you use FRTA's new weekend service?



Survey responses for satisfaction with FRTA's new weekend hours, routes, and geographic coverage (Figure 52) reflected that 49 percent of respondents are satisfied, 38 percent responded that they need weekend service earlier in the morning or later in the day, and 13 percent responded that they need weekend service to another destination.

Figure 52. Are you satisfied with FRTA's new weekend hours, routes, and geographic coverage?



Respondents were asked where FRTA should evaluate adding bus service. Responses below are verbatim public comments. Responses included:

- Near the Green River dog park
- I'm not sure
- South Deerfield
- Weekends
- To the western border of the county
- Amherst, Hadley, Vermont, Shelburne Falls
- Big Y
- Big Y afternoon 20
- More to Shelburne Falls
- Ashfield
- Later buses
- Northfield, Gill, and Bernardston
- Has to be safe and weekend hours need to be reliable
- One more late trip to Northampton, MA
- To Amherst more frequently
- More frequent services to the Northampton region
- Between Amherst and Greenfield
- Shutesbury
- Unsure, but I'm happy to be a thought partner in this for a GCC representative in workforce development
- No, only added evening hours
- Springfield
- Call it the fart bus
- More towards Fosters and Cleveland Street would make transport for me and my friends alot more convenient.
- Big Y
- Hampden County
- More rural areas like the hilltowns, and more service in the North Quabbin
- Actually go to Amherst, or continue the 32 to Athol for connection to Gardner bus.
- Connection to Brattleboro, VT, Pittsfield, North Adams
- Colrain. please
- Springfield
- Near more suburban areas to access more travelers
- An express service connecting Greenfield to the Wachusett commuter rail station would be cool, or a service that connects Deerfield and Sunderland (PVTA 46 does not suffice).

- Amherst
- I don’t know.
- There should be more weekend trips to Big Y throughout the day, the two options that are currently available to get to Big Y are not enough nor provide service for individuals to get to Leyden Woods/ Elm St apt complexes or to Turners depending on where they live.
- Aldi
- Big Y Greenfield
- Turners Falls and more Northampton trips
- Turners and more Northampton hours
- Connect to Vermont
- Coordinate weekend connection times
- Buses should travel everywhere
- To Athol
- I'm not sure.
- More weekend round trips to Big Y Greenfield area
- Willamsburg
- In the country, like Bernardston, near stop and shop has station.
- Homeless
- Add later hours as well as more stops. We should be able to pull the stop cord anywhere we want and be able to wave the us down at any spot as long as it's on the route.
- It would be great if the Access service offered rides to Northampton as it is the biggest city within a reasonable distance< and I would use that route if offered.
- Northampton, MA
- Northfield
- Shelburne
- Northampton
- More near Miller's
- Nowhere
- Hilltowns
- Going to Springfield and Holyoke
- Your survey should do the job
- Hatfield
- Miller's Falls
- Nothing
- Into Hilltowns

- Big Y and Aldi on the weekend
- More inter-TOWN shuttles later in the evenings
- Amherst
- Big Y
- More stops
- FRTA should extend the Shelburne Falls route with a stop over the bridge in Buckland
- Unsure
- We should be able to stop whereever, not at a bus stop like long time ago.
- Everywhere
- More frequent trips to Sunderland (i.e. 3 PM service).
- Athol
- No idea—the windows for demand response are decent but not always ideal; people at JWO are helpful and usually reachable—it's a good service. I only use it right now for medical and I eat out here on those trips, and I sometimes see a friend here then also.
- More stops around Greenfield, it is currently a half-hour walk just to catch the bus.
- Easier to get to Hadley
- Northampton
- 21 route to Aldi
- I don’t know.
- Smoking
- More big buses so everyone gets a seat
- It would be incredibly helpful if weekend service could get me to the Big Y in Greenfield. That stop isn't on the weekend routes. Also, later service in general for weekend and weekday routes would be incredibly helpful! I'd especially like later service for the 23 and 31 routes.
- More stops
- Direct to events in outlying areas
- Northampton
- Could be possible every hour?
- Hilltowns
- More PVTA connections
- GCC sidewalk
- Northfield or Adam's Road
- Cooley Dickinson
- Hadley
- Maple Street

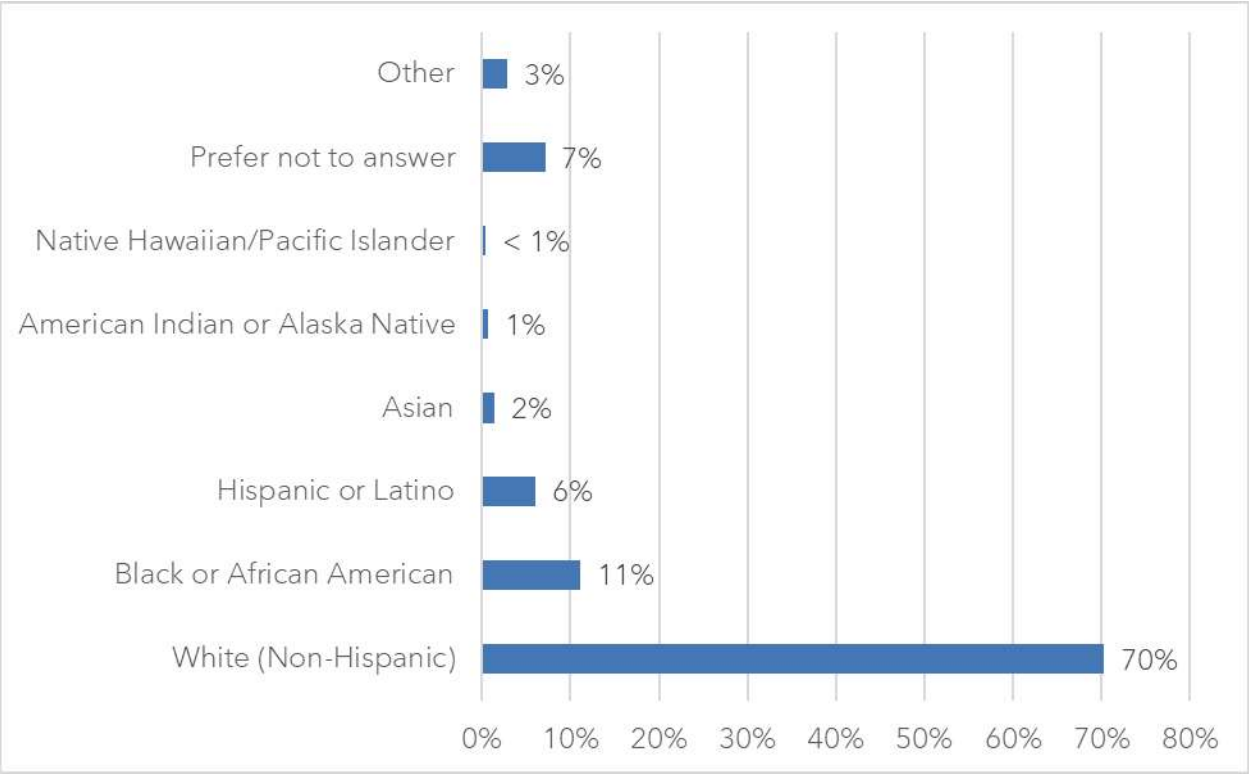
- Hinsdale, VT or Brattleboro, VT
- No where
- Random stops
- Evenings
- The biggest problems right now are how early the fixed route service stops running, and that THE FRTA MICROTRANSIT APP DOESN'T WORK. The app itself is fine, but it won't let you schedule a ride. Also it's almost impossible to find the links to. Microtransit is critical in a rural area like ours, but yeah also being back the GMTA streetcar too, and ask for way, WAY more funding. Rural trams are a thing in Europe etc.
- Conway
- Not sure
- To Springfield
- In Holyoke
- Turners Falls
- Athol
- More hours running on weekends
- Northampton
- You guys do a good job now, but a bus every two hours is pretty bad. How can we get the bus to run more often and later in the day? I need a Northampton bus until like 9 PM at least on weekdays. Please!
- Deerfield to Northampton
- Early in morning to Northampton
- Route 41
- Express Northampton bus
- Towards Oakland Street
- Not sure, more interested in frequency of routes.
- Weekend service should be more frequent, like same as weekday.
- Time. More frequency. I'm making a 2 hour trip as we speak for a 30 minute doctor's appointment. The trip back will no doubt be longer. Please make these more frequent.
- In places that aren't as accessible as other places.
- Deerfield to Sunderland
- On Saturday evening
- Yes and train drivers better, they suck on the road and are unsafe
- 10 by 10
- Not sure
- Northampton
- Conway the main road out of Shelburne Falls

- Aldi, more weekend Big Y
- Not sure
- Millers Falls and on the 31 route
- More announcements that it goes to Warwick
- Belchertown since residents have to walk a quarter of a mile to nearest bus stop.
- More in Sunderland
- Silver Street by High Street because I can't walk that far.
- Add a stop at Prospect Street and Church next to town hall.
- Later hours
- Possibly along Route 2 in Gill or maybe across Route 10 from Bernardston to Gill to Northfield
- NMH campus, Thomas Aquinas campus, Gill Mill gas station
- Doctors appointments in Springfield or Northampton for elderly without cars
- Route 20, through the Hilltowns
- More demand response in the afternoon
- Big Y area
- Athol

Survey responses for race and ethnicity (Figure 53) reflected that respondents identified as the following:

- White (Non-Hispanic) (70 percent)
- Black or African American (11 percent)
- Prefer not to answer (7 percent)
- Hispanic or Latino (6 percent)
- Asian (2 percent)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (1 percent)
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (less than 1 percent)
- Other (3 percent)

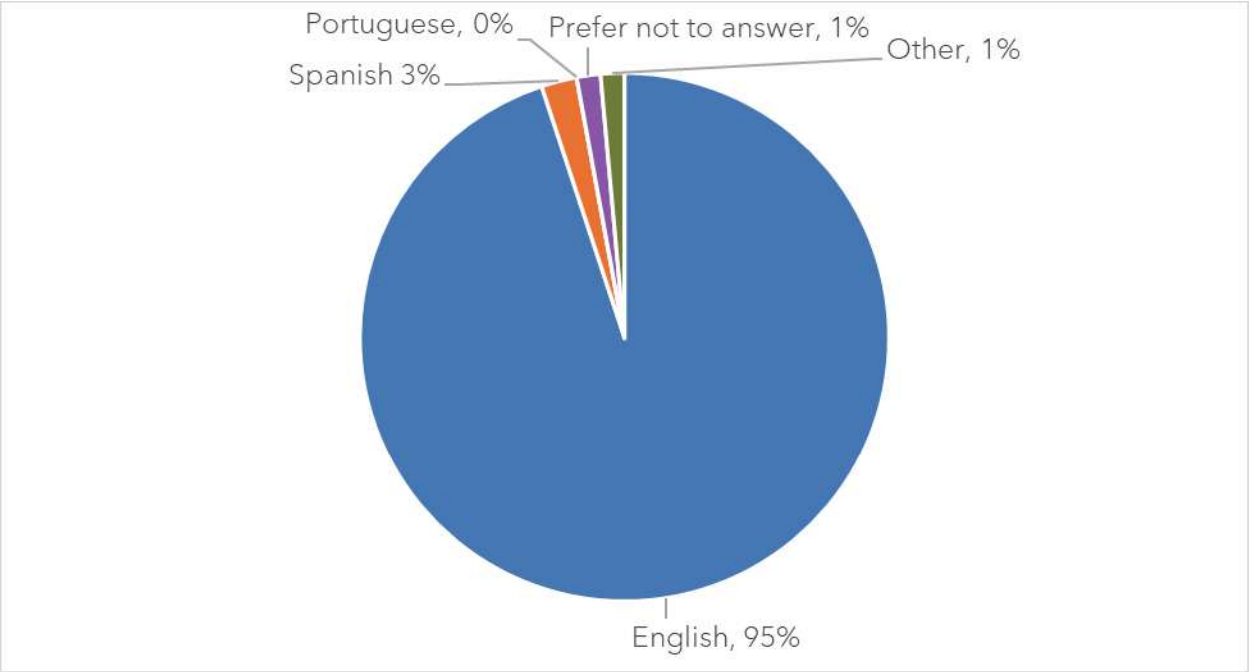
Figure 53. What is your race/ethnicity?



Survey responses about languages (Figure 54) reflected respondents who spoke the following at home:

- English (95 percent)
- Spanish (3 percent)
- Prefer not to answer (1 percent)
- Portuguese (0 percent)
- Other (1 percent)

Figure 54. What languages do you primarily speak at home?



Survey responses for annual household income (Figure 55) reflected that respondents earned the following:

- Less than $10,000 (35 percent)
- $10,000 to $25,000 (24 percent)
- $25,000 to $50,000 (22 percent)
- $50,000 to $75,000 (10 percent)
- More than $75,000 (9 percent)

Figure 55. What is your annual household income?